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MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS



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(From the drawing by Clouet in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris)

MARY
QUEEN OF SCOTS

BY
ERIC LINKLATER

WITH A FRONTISPIECE

PETER DAVIES LIMITED

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TO

STANLEY CURSITER

NOT TO REPAY WITH THESE INDIFFERENT WORDS
SOME EXCELLENT PAINT, BUT SIMPLY IN FRIEND-
SHIP, AND AS ONE ORKNEYMAN TO ANOTHER.

HOW BLEST ARE WE IN THOSE ISLANDS !

I

THE first Mrs. Knox died in December, 1560, but the Reformer's grief was soon mitigated by the divine tact of circumstance, that so often makes neighbours of good tidings and bad. He heard from France that the young king was also dead, and grew happy to think his Catholic shadow no longer menaced the throne of Scotland. 'Lo !' he wrote, 'the potent hand of God from above sent unto us a wonderful and most joyful deliverance. For unhappy Francis, husband to our sovereign, suddenly perisheth of a rotten ear—that deaf ear that never would hear the truth of God.'

The picture of Knox rejoicing over a painful death-bed may be distasteful or even shocking to people whose amusements are more varied than his could be. It must, however, be remembered in his favour that his religion had banished so many forms of pleasure that the surviving occasions for it had acquired the exquisite value of rarity. To the Calvinist dancing was a sin, music an abomination ; in

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Geneva it was a crime to put finery in one's wardrobe or too many dishes on the table ; while profligates must often have grown cold in their beds to remember that drowning was one of the penalties for discovered wantonness.

The demise or defeat of one's enemies and the enemies of Calvin's Church was therefore among the few permitted opportunities for enjoyment still remaining to the Chosen People of Geneva and the Congregation of Christ in Scotland ; and news that the young king of Catholic France, the Catholic husband of the Queen of Scots, had been punished for the iniquity of himself and his country by a septic inflammation of his ear, so painful and immoderate as to cause death, undoubtedly brought something like an April holiday into the wintry life of John Knox.

By 1561 the curious insanity of Calvinism had seriously infected Scotland, and it was Knox who chiefly carried the infection. But even so ably violent a man as he could not have spread a disease to which the country was not already disposed to succumb. Politically and spiritually, Scotland was in a debilitated condition, for French armies and English armies had recently been using it for their battlefield, and for a long time the energy of

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the Catholic Church had been seriously impaired by the excessive burden of its wealth. The economic character of the country was being altered by the emergence of a commercial middle class, and to these people Calvinism appealed by its prison-like government that seemed likeliest to promise safety both for themselves and their newly acquired wealth, since between lawless nobles and predatory priests nothing less formidably strong than a prison could offer much security: while to the rabble of the lower orders a force so hostile as Calvinism to the wealthy Catholic Church, and so physically destructive in its teaching, made naturally a great appeal, and the demolition of the abbeys, which Knox encouraged, flattered their sense of power and justified their faith.

But, apart from economic and social reasons, Calvinism evidently appealed to something that may or may not have been a deformity in the soul of Scotland. The spirit of fatalism derived from Norse ancestors, and somewhat warped and emaciated in its transmission through the ages, may have disposed the Scots to a belief in Genevan predestination. Because of their stubborn pride it cannot have seemed to them so unlikely as it might to some other

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rages that they were truly God's Elect ; and a native savagery, fostered by climate and the historical insecurity of their lives, certainly condoned the ferocity with which they treated those who doubted the Calvinist tenets. And yet another reason for Knox's success was the disputatious temper of Scotland, that found in these new doctrines, based though they were upon the most naïve of fallacies, a foundation that would support a multitude of metaphysical arguments and upon which disquisition could knock its tireless head with the good wooden sound of apparent logic.

Knox and Calvinism, then, were mountainous features of the country whose fog-bound shores *la reine blanche* was now approaching.

Prominent as they in the landscape were the Lords of the Congregation, nobles who had supported the Reformation mainly for political reasons, and retained beneath the common skin of their new faith the old selfish skeleton of sturdy individualism. The most important of these nobles was Lord James Stuart, a bastard half-brother of the Queen, who committed his crimes with a cold show of reason, repaid a benefit with discreetest treachery, and was subsequently known as the Good Regent ; there was Maitland of Lethington, a brilliant

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politician, a man of such subtlety and frequent good sense that it is impossible not to admire him, and whose occasional treacheries may readily be excused on the ground that he regarded conduct as an intellectual experiment ; there was Kirkcaldy of Grange, a roughish soldier of fortune ; there were Arran and Argyll, the former precariously balanced on the extreme edge of sanity, the latter a good Protestant, but somewhat assiduous in asserting the inviolability of his Election by the enthusiasm of his profligacy ; there was the Earl of Morton, rough as Kirkcaldy, more treacherous than Lord James, and earnest in greed ; and there was Ruthven, who was supposed to be a sorcerer, who took such an interest in death that he rose from a sick-bed to put armour over his night-gown and murder Riccio, and who in a Scotland not destitute of wickedness was said to be the wickedest of his generation.

In the north there was the Earl of Huntly, a staunch Catholic whose ambition was as determined and self-seeking as that of any Protestant. And south of the Border there was Queen Elizabeth, the daughter of Anne Boleyn, illegitimate in the opinion of all Catholic Europe and according to the decree

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of Henry VIII and his parliament ; seated on her throne by no right except the will of her Protestant people ; desperately afraid of the French widow who was *de jure* Queen of England and had quartered on her own arms the arms of England ; and wealthy enough in money and good servants to sow disaffection in Scotland and buy the occasional services of Queen Mary's nobles.

Mary was eighteen when she came home to Scotland. In the courts of France—her own and that of her gallant father-in-law—her beauty had been celebrated by poets, her poetry praised by scholars, her wit extolled by courtiers, and the grace of her dancing acclaimed by all. The court of Henri II had combined profligacy with a cultivated enthusiasm for art, and, however zealous in its pursuit of love, had still found time for hot debate on the theories of the Pléiade. Marot had written :

'Amour, tu as esté mon maistre :
Je t'ai servi sur tous les dieux,
O si je pouvois deux fois naistre,
Comme je te servirois mieux !'

—but Ronsard, with a more divided eye, bade his mistress

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‘ Quand vous serez bien vieille, au soir, à la chandelle,
Assise auprès du feu, devidant et filant,
Direz chantant mes vers, en vous esmerveillant :
Ronsard me celebroit du temps que j'estois belle.’

It was this dichotomy that allowed Mary to be the chaste ornament of a wanton court. In so charming a society love might enter the service of poetry, if poetry did not care to be the pander of love, and beauty could be recognised, wit be applauded, even though they did not lead to a display of their charms and ingenuity in a bedroom. Mary was courted and hymned by voices that Knox would have found evil enough, but she did not forfeit admiration because she declined admiration more intimate than that of the voice and the eye. In a court where slander was the staple of conversation no slander touched her, and though intrigue dwelt in every corridor and whispered among the roses she was unsullied even by suspicion. For this purity there seem to be three sufficient reasons: she was naturally chaste; she had been educated by her grandmother, Antoinette de Bourbon, a devout and austere old lady; and her political ambition was so strong and so deeply rooted as to occupy most of her thoughts. She believed in the rightness of her claim to the English throne,

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and she wanted to occupy that throne. Maitland said of her : ' The Queen my mistress is descended of the blood of England, and so of the race of the Lion on both sides. I fear she would rather be content to hazard all than forgo her right.' Therefore she abstained from taking lovers, because lovers might impair her political resolution and stain the reputation of one who was to be a great queen, and because lovers were not to her liking : since, despite a rich endowment of the external qualities of a sexual nature, her nature was not, in essence, strongly sexual.

In view of the later circumstances of her life, and of the misinterpretations that have been so commonly placed upon her conduct, it is important to realise the unblemished reputation with which she came to Scotland ; and to recognise the seriousness of her political ambition will obviate many difficulties in understanding her subsequent career.

To Elizabeth the gravity of Mary's challenge was obvious, and she had been well advised of her rival's character. Throckmorton, the English ambassador in France, had written : ' Since her husband's death she hath showed (and so continueth) that she is both of great wisdom for her years, modesty, and also of

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great judgment in the wise handling herself and her matters, which, increasing with her years, cannot but turn greatly to her commendation, reputation, honour and great benefit of her and her country.' Throckmorton suspected her ambition. 'The Queen of Scots,' he wrote, 'doth carry herself so honourably, advisedly, and discreetly, as I cannot but fear her progress.' So Elizabeth declared her hostility and refused to grant Mary a safe-conduct for her voyage to England ; and Mary, forgetting her discretion, as she often did when anger moved her, was unwise enough to utter a half-threat against Elizabeth : 'Let the Queen, your mistress, think that it will be thought very strange amongst all princes and countries, that she should first animate my subjects against me, and now being widow, to impeach my going into my own country. I ask her nothing but friendship. I do not trouble her State, nor practise with her subjects ; and yet I know there be in her realm that be inclined enough to hear offers : I know also they be not of the mind she is of, neither in religion or other things.'

Daring the anger of her kinswoman, and the fleet which her kinswoman sent to intercept her, Mary set sail from Calais on August 14th, 1561, and five days later, in the early morn-

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ing, came safely to Leith. She carried something of France with her. Her uncles, the Duc d'Aumale, the Marquis d'Elbeuf, and the Grand Prior, accompanied her, and in her train were the Abbé de Brantôme, M. d'Amville, who for long had wooed her with a persistence unshaken by all denials, and the poet Chastelard, a servant of d'Amville. The port of Leith lay darkly under a thick fog when she landed. The haar had been of some use in shaking off the pursuing ships of England, but Knox, with his happy knack of perceiving everywhere symbols of destruction, discovered in it a mighty omen of disaster : ' The very face of heaven,' he wrote, ' did manifestly speak what comfort was brought into this country with her ; to wit, sorrow, dolour, darkness and all impiety ; for in the memory of man, that day of the year, was never seen a more dolorous face of the heaven, than was at her arrival, which two days after did so continue : For besides the surface wet, and corruption of the air, the mist was so thick and dark that scarce might any man espy another the length of two pair of butts ; the sun was not seen to shine two days before nor two days after. That forewarning God gave unto us ; but alas ! the most part were blind ! '

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It was a dismal arrival in her kingdom—though possibly not so dark as it appeared to Knox—but the citizens of Edinburgh did what they could to adorn the occasion, and for that and several succeeding nights serenaded her window at Holyrood with the subdued gaiety of psalm-tunes, and for her official entry into Edinburgh prepared a series of pageants which, though doubtless expressing loyalty, contained an element of didacticism that could not have been very pleasing to the Queen. There was no harm in presenting her with a Bible and a Psalter covered in fine purple velvet, but it was tactless, at such a time, to accompany the gift with a song instructing her that in them

‘ your Grace may read to understand
The perfect way unto the heavens hie,
And how to rule your subjects and your land,
And how your kingdom ’stablished shall be. . . .

A gift more precious could we none present,
Nor yet more needful to your Excellence.’

And though at one part of the Queen’s progress she saw fountains running wine, at another she encountered a device representing the burning of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram for their sin of idolatry. Some of the more ingenuous citizens had intended to present the effigy of a priest and burn it in the act of

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elevating the Host ; but the Catholic Earl of Huntly dissuaded them from that. It was clear, then, that Mary's first task was to deal in some way or another with the tenacity and suspicion of the self-styled Congregation of Christ. Her French courtiers did her no good in their sight, but her own charm and beauty soon made converts—to her, not to her faith—among the Protestant nobles. Even Knox struggled to be fair, and was as fair as he could be. ' We call her not a hoor,' he wrote, ' but she was brought up in the company of the wildest hoor-mongers, yea, of such as no more regarded incest than honest men regard the company of their lawful wives.'

It is interesting to think that in his constant preoccupation with sexual activity Knox might have found common ground with the Abbé de Brantôme.

II

THE struggle between Mary and the Congregation had a political significance at least as immediate as its spiritual implications. The Congregation was well aware of Elizabeth's religion, and not uninterested in her policy. They suspected that Mary's faith was a bond between her and France. They had a childish horror of the Mass, an earnest desire to humiliate their enemies, and a knowledge of the Old Testament that told them how often princes had been overthrown when their behaviour was unpopular with the chosen tribes of God. Mary's conduct in this first crisis of her reign was wholly admirable. She showed the Reformers that tolerance which good sense and proper feeling and diplomacy all made desirable, she was patient under the burden of their stupidity, and long-suffering with their misrepresentation ; she defended the right of a sovereign to rule, and her individual right to worship as she chose, with fortitude and a heart constant and devout. It is well to

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remember that she was only nineteen when, so wisely and bravely, she confronted Knox and the inflamed abbey-wreckers.

Her first interview with the Reformer took place at Holyrood, with none other present in the room but Lord James, and two gentlewomen standing at the far end. After some talk about *The Monstrous Regiment of Women*, and Knox's war against her mother, the conversation turned to general discussion of a sovereign's rights, and Knox mentioned, as a justification for intransigence, the stubborn opposition to their rulers of Israel in Egypt, Daniel under Nebuchadnezzar, and the Early Christians under Rome.

Mary said, 'Yea, but none of these men raised the sword against their princes.'

'God, Madam, had not given unto them the power and the means,' said Knox.

'Think ye that subjects having power may resist their princes?'

'If their princes exceed their bounds, Madam, no doubt they should be resisted, even by power. For there is neither greater honour nor greater obedience to be given to kings or princes than God has commanded to be given to father and mother. But, Madam, the father may be stricken with a frenzy, in which he

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would slay his own children. Now, Madam, if the children arise, join themselves together, apprehend the father, take the sword or other weapons from him, and finally bind his hands, and keep him in prison, until his frenzy be overpast ; think ye, Madam, that the children do any wrong ? Or think ye, Madam, that God will be offended with them that have stayed their father from committing wickedness ? It is even so, Madam, with princes that would murder the children of God that are subject unto them. Their blind zeal is nothing but a very mad frenzy : and therefore, to take the sword from them, to bind their hands, and to cast them into prison until they be brought to a more sober mind, is no disobedience against princes, but just obedience, because it agreeth with the will of God.'

After this remarkable speech the Queen was silent for a long time, standing 'as it were amazed,' as Knox himself ingenuously records. At last she said, 'Well, then, I perceive that my subjects shall obey you, and not me ; and shall do what they like, and not what I command ; and so must I be subject to them and not they to me.'

Knox, with comparative humility, replied that his task on earth was to persuade both

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princes and people to obey God ; and God, he said, would like kings to be, as it were, foster-fathers to His Church, and queens to be nurses to His people.

‘ Yea,’ said Mary, ‘ but ye are not the Kirk that I will nurse. I will defend the Kirk of Rome, for I think it is the true Kirk of God.’

No bull ever roused more swiftly at a red cloak than Knox at the Scarlet Woman. The word *Rome* stung him to sudden wrath.

‘ Your will, Madam, is no reason !’ he shouted. ‘ Neither doth your thought make of that Roman harlot the true and immaculate spouse of Jesus Christ. Wonder not, Madam, that I call Rome a harlot ; for that Church is altogether polluted with all kind of spiritual fornication, as well in doctrine as in manners.’

The Queen answered, ‘ My conscience is not so.’

‘ Conscience, Madam, requires knowledge : and I fear that right knowledge ye have none.’

‘ But I have both heard and read.’

‘ So, Madam, did the Jews that crucified Christ Jesus read both the Law and the Prophets, and heard the same interpreted after their manner. Have ye heard any teach, but such as the Pope and his Cardinals have

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allowed? Ye may be assured that such will speak nothing to offend their own estate.'

'Ye interpret the Scriptures in one manner,' said the Queen, 'and they interpret in another; whom shall I believe? And who shall be judge?'

This was Knox's opportunity. His answer came loud and sudden as though at that moment a Bible were punched and the plain deal top of a pulpit shivered under the weight of a Presbyterian fist: 'Ye shall believe God, that plainly speaketh in His Word; and, farther than the Word teaches you, ye shall believe neither the one nor the other.'

Then followed a brief sermon on the Mass, and Knox's assurance that in the Gospels there was no mention of that iniquity and therefore no authority for it.

Mary listened wearily. 'Ye are ower sair for me,' she said. And then, with a spurt of defiance, and youth's charming pathetic trust in its teachers, 'If they were here that I have heard, they would answer you!' she cried.

Soon after that she was called away to dinner, and Knox left her with the prayer that she might be 'as blessed within the commonwealth of Scotland, if it be the pleasure of God, as ever Deborah was in the common-

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wealth of Israel.' He had won the debate, but he was not easy about the future. Some friends asked him what he thought of the Queen, and he answered, 'If there be not in her a proud mind, a crafty wit, and an obdurate heart against God and His truth, my judgment faileth me.'

He was frightened of her, perhaps in a curious superstitious way ; perhaps because he half-guessed how bleak and cold and foolish would the life he preached appear if it were compared with the life that she represented ; perhaps because he quite simply feared that she would destroy his fine position in Scotland.

Knox was fifty-seven at this time. He had the full, staring eye of the fanatic, a blunt aggressive nose, and a beard of extravagant length. His manner was dictatorial. He debated with the truculence, the heavy-hided complacency of the bigot. His arguments were swift and tortuous, but his understanding was inflexible, stony and bemused.

Mary was tall beyond the average, a good six feet high, slim and marvellously graceful in movement. She had fine white hands and beautiful fingers. Her face was a long oval, the skin so white that in the days of her widow-

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hood, when she mourned her husband *en deuil blanc*, its exquisite pallor was said to contend with the whiteness of her veil and carry off the prize. Her forehead was round and high, her chin round without cleft or dimple. She had a long straight nose, and her lips were beautifully moulded. The upper lip, notched like Cupid's bow, thrust forward over the lower one, and they closed in a sweet alluring gravity. But more noteworthy than her mouth and the even pallor of her cheeks was the colour of her eyes, that shone with a light warmer than amber, a light set deeply under heavy lids that did not obscure it. Her eyebrows were high thin arches, and her hair, crisped in small curls, was fair with auburn tints : *blonds et cendrez*, Brantôme calls it, but her painters make it darker than that.

Even a cold catalogue of her features can rouse a little wonder, a little envy of those who knew her, and anger against those who failed her ; but to the inventory of a fine straight nose, eyes that were full of light, and a most lovely mouth, must be added courage, gaiety, a mind quick and cultivated, a kindling friendship ; she could think wisely, talk wittily, live gracefully, and be moved to highest spirits when she rode in roughness and danger through

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the Highlands or among the rivers of Liddesdale.

She could make swift decisions and act upon them. She could pursue a policy of prudent conciliation like any greybeard—but lest prudence should grow like lethargy or submission she would sometimes leap out of its slow stream with a sudden fierce resentment. She had acknowledged by proclamation the official standing of Protestantism, but when, in the autumn of 1561, Archibald Douglas of Kilspindie was re-elected Provost of Edinburgh, and celebrated his return to office by an open order banishing from the city all adulterers, fornicators, drunkards, mass-mongers, and obstinate papists, Mary, no more of a libertine than the Provost himself, flamed with anger to have her Church invidiously thrust into such hedonistic company, and promptly ordered the arrest of Kilspindie and his bailies.

She was constantly harassed by Protestant sniping, and though she tried very honestly to come to an understanding with Knox she failed, and the pulpits remained centres of disaffection. Her servants were beaten for going to Mass. It was suggested that her subjects lay under no compulsion of obedience to one who was an idolater. She could not dance in

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Holyrood House without dancing being condemned in St. Giles. When hail fell in winter Knox found it to be a sure sign that Heaven disapproved of her French ways ; and when the Highlanders were smitten by famine a bare year after she had visited them, Knox declared that the ruinous increase in the price of meal was God's device to punish them for the idolatry of their wicked Queen.

In the next year or two she argued with him on several occasions, and once, her spirit failing before his hardened piety, she wept bitterly. ' I have borne with you in all your rigorous manner of speaking, both against myself and against my uncles,' she cried ; ' yea, I have sought your favour by all possible means : I offered unto you presence and audience, whensoever it pleased you to admonish me, and yet I cannot be quit of you : I vow to God I shall be once revenged.'

And having uttered this threat, as Knox complacently reports, ' Scarce could Marnock, her secret chamber boy, get napkins to hold her eyes dry, for the tears and the howling, besides womanly weeping, stayed her speech.'

In December, 1563, it seemed as though her opportunity for revenge had come. Knox wrote a letter to the brethren that might be

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construed as treason, and he was summoned to appear before the Privy Council. A great crowd followed him to Holyrood in the dark of a winter evening. They invaded the palace and pressed against the doors. The Lords were assembled. The Queen entered the Council chamber and sat beside Lethington. Knox stood at the far end of the table, bare-headed. Mary looked at him and laughed. 'This is a good beginning,' she said. 'But know ye why I laugh? Yon man gart me greet and grat never tear himself. I will see if I can gar him greet.'

But this impetuous display of feeling was not a good beginning for a judicial occasion, and Mary made things worse by trying to take control of the case into her own hands. Knox was too clever for her, and evaded the major charge by relegating responsibility for his actions to God. He had two forensic gifts of great value : with the ease of a conjurer he could produce the Rock of Ages from under his beard, and with the skill of a cuttle-fish he could darken the atmosphere with an inky effusion of sophistries. Mary was no match for him. Nor did Lethington care to stand openly against him ; and Lord James voted for his acquittal. So Knox went free, and

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Mary, finding none of the Protestant Lords on whom she could rely for help and sympathy, began to look elsewhere for a counsellor.

She found him in a small misshapen Italian called David Riccio, who had come to Scotland among the servants of the ambassador of Savoy. He was clever, well-educated, sympathetic, and a gifted musician. Presently he became the Queen's French secretary.

In the spring of the year following his trial, Knox, strengthened perhaps by his triumph over the Queen, married Margaret Stuart, a daughter of Lord Ochiltrec. The Great Reformer was now fifty-nine, and his bride was fifteen. They went to church on Palm Sunday. Knox had severely reproved the Queen for spiritual fornication, but there was nothing spiritual in his attitude to Margaret, and so nothing culpable.

III

DESPITE the truculence of the Congregation the first four years of Mary's reign were comparatively peaceful, and the material condition of the realm of Scotland became progressively happier. The credit for this belongs to Mary, to Lethington, and to Lord James ; and as the establishment of Lethington and Lord James in responsible positions was due to Mary's wise recognition of their capabilities the major credit is hers. In the sixteenth century four years of peace was not to be despised. It is true that there were minor interruptions : Lord James successfully undertook a punitive foray in the Borders, and Mary herself saw a small Highland campaign. But, judged by Scottish standards, the years between 1561 and 1565 were commendably quiet.

The Highland campaign is interesting on three counts : it reveals a very attractive martial aspect of Mary's character, it discloses again the seriousness of her political ambition, and, in its upshot, it supports the view that

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her nature, so far from being sexual, had a certain fundamental coldness.

The Earl of Huntly, a Catholic, was the most powerful figure north of the Highland line. His piper, playing *The Cock o' the North*, flattered him only in so far as a statement of the truth may be considered flattery. He had offered to establish Mary on her throne as the Catholic queen of Catholic subjects—restoring the old faith by the redoubtable advocacy of his clan—and Mary, with politic good sense, had rejected his overtures. His son, Sir John Gordon, was an attractive wild young man who had come to court and shown his awareness of the Queen's charm ; and it is suggested that she had not been blind to his heritage of the Gordons' gay virtue. But Sir John got into trouble for brawling and was committed to prison, from which, with the resourcefulness of his family, he promptly escaped. He declined to surrender himself, and was supported in rebellion by his father. This open defiance very usefully brought to a head the antagonism between Huntly and Lord James, and the Queen, mobilising a small force, took to the field and marched northwards. She reached Inverness in September, 1562, and was refused entrance to the castle, which was in the keeping of the

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Gordons. But on the following day the country rallied to the Queen's side, not to the Gordons', as Huntly had expected, and the castle had to surrender. The captain was hanged, but the rest of the tiny garrison was treated with clemency. Now the Queen's journey had been long and difficult, it was unusually cold, and the weather was of that miserable kind that presages a winter harvest. But in spite of discomfort and danger the Queen rode in high spirits. Randolph, writing to Cecil, reports: 'In all these broils I assure you I never saw her merrier, never dismayed, nor never thought that so much stomach to be in her that I find. She repented nothing but, (when the lords and others at Inverness came in the morning from the watch,) that she was not a man, to know what life it was to lie all night in the fields, or to walk on the causeway with a jack and knapsack, a Glasgow buckler, and a broad sword.'

Huntly, after some dissembling, decided that open hostility gave him the best chance of success and gathered his Gordons. Two thousand clansmen of other families gathered to the Queen's standard, and she crossed the Spey in bright anticipation of enemies and a battle at the fording of it. But she came to

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Aberdeen without hindrance and the good town gave her a handsome welcome.

Caution was never one of the Gordon vices, and Huntly, with seven hundred men, made a threatening move against the city. The Queen's army, three times as strong, under Atholl, Morton, and Lord James—now created Earl of Murray—marched to meet him at Corrichie and routed him there, taking prisoner Huntly himself, Sir John, and a younger brother called Adam. Huntly died of shock—cerebral hæmorrhage is more likely than a broken heart—and the well-favoured Sir John was condemned to death. Mary consented to his execution, and was present, though unwillingly, when a bungling headsman most clumsily carried out the sentence.

Now Sir John's crime was rebellion, but not the instigation or captaincy of rebellion, in an age when armed revolt was hardly more remarkable than evasion of income-tax to-day ; Sir John was a young man of pleasant appearance and personality, whose manly gifts had included a warm appreciation of the Queen's charm and beauty ; and Sir John's death-sentence was approved by the Queen. Is this the action of a woman dominated by sensual motives, or of a woman influenced primarily by

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political considerations? The sensual person, unless sensuality has become gross and perverted, is usually not unsentimental; but the truly political person has a single vision and a hand, when the time comes, cold enough for death-warrants. To explain the death of Sir John Gordon, Mary must either be held to have been wholly under the influence of her half-brother, and that is contrary to both the documentation and the undertones of history; or tainted with sadistic enthusiasm, and that is unsupported either by evidence or probability; or inspired by a dominating political ambition—and that becomes manifest to anyone who examines the history of her reign without prejudice in favour of the Reformation or a mind romantically coloured by Swinburne's portrait of his Scottish Dolores.

Another incident that supports this reading of her character is the execution of Chastelard. That unfortunate poet had gone back to France and then, driven by the fate attendant on romantic poet-lovers, had returned to Scotland. The Queen showed him certain favours. He was accomplished in words and music, and he danced well. In a dance called the Purpose, where there was opportunity for partners to talk with each other, the Queen, says Knox,

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habitually chose the Frenchman ; and in her cabinet, he avers, she ' would lie upon Chastelard's shoulder, and sometimes privily she would steal a kiss of his neck.' But the Reformer, with a magnanimous recollection of his own entertainment on social occasions, hastens to add that ' all this was honest enough ; for it was the gentle entreatment of a stranger.' Yet Chastelard, with the curious naïveté of his country, apparently misunderstood it, for presently he appeared, to the Queen's surprise, in the Queen's bedchamber when she was about to retire.

For this first indiscretion he was reproved and pardoned. But again he invaded the royal privacy, concealing himself under the bed, and this second importunacy drove the Queen to violent anger. She called the Earl of Murray, and in a mood bordering on hysteria charged him, if he loved her, to kill the foolish poet. Murray first consented, then demurred. But the Queen insisted. So Chastelard was examined, tried, condemned, and on the 22nd of February, 1563, beheaded. The cause of his death, he said, was ' pour estre trouvé en lieu trop suspect.'

The explanation is accurate enough so far as it goes, but it betrays the same misleading

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simplicity that took him into the unfriendly air of the Queen's bedroom. He had not perceived the possibility that a woman may enjoy affectionate dancing, and even find pleasure in kissing, without desiring love's ultimate issue. Had he lived he would have applauded Donne's judgment that whoever loves without proposing the right true end of love is

‘ one that goes
To sea for nothing but to make him sick.’

But, dying for this belief, he was still not granted the vision to perceive that love has its degrees, and that Mary found pleasure rather in its trimmings and ornaments, its courtous epiphenomena, than in the solid familiarity of its simplest expression. Whether this preference was due to a natural disinclination or to some imposed prohibition due to the primacy of her political aims one cannot say ; but in view of subsequent events it seems probable that her sexual enthusiasm and even ability were comparatively slight.

Her insistence on Chastelard's death—she did insist on it—certainly appears to indicate a most maidenly resentment of his intrusion : either she was moved to a semi-hysterical virginal hatred of the invading male ; or, as

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a political person, she was sternly angered by the stain on her reputation ; or she was sadistically inclined and seized the opportunity to destroy something in which she had taken pleasure. But there is no evidence whatsoever that she suffered from this perversion : there is, on the contrary, proof that kindness, gentleness, and most Christian charity were her normal characteristics.

Swinburne, laudably seeking some Lady of Pain to release from virtue a generation that seemed to him unnecessarily and ungracefully virtuous, sought to persuade his readers that Mary was such a one. ‘ Surely,’ he says,

‘ But surely you were something better
Than innocent ! ’

But though the scarlet and gold of his interpretation may seem to clothe the Queen in garments that suit her well enough, a more careful examination will show that his garments are reach-me-down stuff, and Mary is ill at ease in the vestments of a tragic wanton. None of the Stuarts was simple in character. James I was an athlete and a hunter of heretics, an energetic king and a very pretty poet. His son was vigorous, soldierly, and popular ; his grandson was properly despised

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for his sedentary habits and artistic tastes. James IV was superstitious and business-like, devoted to the ideas of chivalry and deeply interested in surgery. Intellectual distinction disputed with congenital misfortune for pride of place in the Stuart heritage, and their pedigree is a tale of polygonal pegs in severely square holes. Mary, who is Scotland's Helen and Scotland's Deirdre, was something of a prude under her beauty, and while she danced the Purpose and touched with her lips the neck of poor deluded Chastelard, her mind was revolving thoughts of kingship and policy. Perhaps, to understand her character, there is more relevance in the devotion of her four Maries than in the untimely ardour of the Frenchman.

IV

VERY soon after the death of Francis suitors appeared for Mary's hand, and in the following years there was a brisk influx of marriage proposals, suggestions or rumours of such proposals. The choice of a consort for Scotland was important both to Mary and to Elizabeth. Elizabeth knew that Mary's claim to succeed her, should she die childless, was valid in law and acceptable to many of her subjects ; and she recognised the futility of hoping for a direct heir. But Elizabeth had not officially recognised Mary as her presumptive successor, and so long as there was a possibility that she might be persuaded to do this it would have been foolish to antagonise her by accepting the proposals of any suitor whose presence in Scotland might seem to menace, by reason of his alien connexion, the peace of England. For this reason the overtures of Catholic princes had necessarily to be rejected.

But Elizabeth realised the impossibility of keeping Mary for ever unmarried, and fore-

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saw that her privilege of veto—or, at the least, of cogent disapproval—would wackn with repetition. She therefore cast about for a husband who would not, by enhancing the prestige of the Scottish throne, create a near rivalry to her own influence, and found such a one in Lord Robert Dudley. Elizabeth's diplomacy was masterly so long as it remained negative, but when it emerged from the thickets of tergiversation and assumed, in the open, a positive form, it was not always so happy.

Mary, to no one's surprise except Elizabeth's, received without enthusiasm the suggestion that she might care to marry her cousin's jaded favourite—the widower of Amy Robsart and perhaps her murderer—and became increasingly sure that in her search for a husband she would get no help from England.

This action of Elizabeth's must share responsibility with the refusal of the Privy Council to convict Knox on the charge of treason for persuading Mary to adopt a bolder and more individual policy. If the Protestant Lords would not help her, if they were really so unsympathetic, then she would do without their advice and help, and take counsel with Riccio ; if Elizabeth could suggest no better

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husband than Dudley, then she would find a husband for herself.

But now the English Queen conceived a brilliant idea. There was in her court a young Scots nobleman called Darnley, whose father, Matthew Stewart, Earl of Lennox, had long been exiled in England. Lennox had married a granddaughter of Henry VII ; he himself was a great-great-grandson of James II of Scotland. Darnley had therefore a claim, after Mary, to the English throne, and was also born of the royal house of Scotland. On his mother's side he and Mary were in some sort cousins, and on his father's side they were distantly akin. Elizabeth cast her bread on the waters and gave Darnley permission to return to Scotland.

His connexion with the two thrones would certainly recommend him to Mary. Any husband of suitable connexions and sufficiently noble descent would, by the normal expectation of issue, strengthen her position on the Scottish throne ; and Darnley, with his Tudor blood, would augment her ultimate hope of the Tudor crown. In these circumstances it may seem foolish of Elizabeth to have facilitated their marriage. But Darnley, so far from being what he appeared to be, a reinforcement for Mary's ambition, was actually a potent dis-

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ruptive element. He was, indeed, ideally cast for the part Elizabeth intended him to play : he was handsome enough, amiable and well enough born to woo a queen, and having won her he was weak enough, silly and vicious enough, to alienate his ministers and weaken the power of the throne. His religion was not so obvious as to make him apparently ineligible for the throne of a Protestant country, but once he had taken his place on the consort's half of that throne his position would so exalt his nominal Catholicism as to make it either a real obstacle between him and his titular subjects, or at least an excuse to foment disaffection. And Murray, whose status in Scotland a strong king must inevitably diminish, would find so many to sympathise with him in protesting against his supersession by a creature so poor as Darnley, that his ambition might well be encouraged to emerge as active hostility against the Crown.

Almost immediately the plot began to work. Mary met her cousin at Stirling. Darnley's royal ancestors had prepared a suitable atmosphere for his welcome, and Darnley's tall and pretty youth created a favourable impression. Nature had given him a pleasant exterior. He was of uncommonly high stature, and that

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relieved the Queen, with her own great height, of the embarrassment of stooping to converse that she must have experienced with many of her courtiers. He had a beardless, rather feminine countenance, and an easy manner that concealed an underlying insolence. He was a skilled horseman, fond of hunting and hawking. He also had such indoor graces as a taste for music and a slight talent for versifying, together with the indoor frailties of a certain enthusiasm for wine, a somewhat immoderate appetite, and what a Puritan writer calls liberality 'in Venus' chamber.' He was, in fact, the kind of young man who can readily make himself popular on first acquaintance, and whose true character, slowly revealed in intimacy, becomes increasingly disappointing. A good complexion is more immediately obvious than a stupid pride, and a handsome carriage, an urbane manner, may establish such a favourable concept that the exposure of a silly slipshod character can destroy it only by slow degrees. Darnley had the requisite equipment of a rapid wooer—and a title, not too remote, to the throne of England.

Then, in Stirling Castle, Darnley fell ill of the measles, and Mary nursed him. She sat by his bed till midnight—and what armour is

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proof against fear of gossip, dread of infection, and the tedium of a sick-room except love? Mary was in love. Darnley recovered from the measles and took to bed again with an ague. Once more the Queen became his nurse, and now it was said she stayed in his room even later than midnight. The gossips grew very busy, and busiest of them all was Lady Lennox, Darnley's mother, who whispered confidentially to chance acquaintances that Mary and her son were already as good as married. Lady Lennox undoubtedly enjoyed herself at this time, but natural pride may have led her to overstate the privileges as yet enjoyed by Darnley. But certainly he was in great favour, and when Elizabeth with characteristic diplomacy endeavoured to recall Lennox and his son from their leave of absence Mary's ardour was sensibly increased. Throckmorton was sent to Scotland to tell Mary that Elizabeth disliked the thought of her marriage as it would be dangerous to the amity of the two kingdoms, and that while she would let Mary choose any other of her nobles, she would only consent to a public proclamation of Mary's right to succeed her if Mary chose Lord Robert Dudley.

But there was hardly need for these politic threats. Mary had taken the bait so cunningly

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chosen, and the only possibility of a last minute escape lay in her chance perception of the trap into which she had walked. Throckmorton wrote to Cecil of his fear lest any coming from England 'should be able to give this Queen intelligence that her proceedings with Lord Darnley are not so ill taken there by her Majesty (Elizabeth) and her Council as I pretended in all my negotiations; for that would much hinder the purpose the Queen would be at.' But no such fortunate accident occurred, and even Lethington, moved to passion for once in his life, could not dissuade Mary from the calamitous alliance on which she had set her heart.

Darnley was created Earl of Ross, then Duke of Albany. It was rumoured that a secret marriage had already been celebrated. The public service took place in the chapel of Holyrood House on the 29th of July, 1565, with solemnity enhanced to an unusual degree by Mary's wedding-dress, which was black. Thereafter the Lords then present in Edinburgh heard the heralds proclaim Darnley King; but not one of the nobles fortified the announcement with his accordant Amen save Lennox, who flattered his paternity with a loud cry, 'God save his Grace!'

V

It is reasonable to suppose and agreeable to believe that for a little while after her marriage Mary was not unhappy. She was, past doubting, Scotland's Queen that summer, fearless, sagacious, and deservedly fortunate. Murray fled from her, openly hostile now, jealous of Darnley, angered because Mary knew of his ambition for the crown and mocked his hope. Her Protestant people, somewhat alarmed by their acquisition of a nominally Catholic king, were pacified by proclamations of her goodwill to them and her assurance that they would continue to enjoy free use of their faith and their conscience ; and the General Assembly was properly but politely snubbed for its rude demand that the Queen should receive in her own person the Reformed religion. This she declined to do. Having admitted the right of others to worship as they chose, she not unnaturally maintained a similar privilege for herself. But the Lords of the Congregation had, when it suited them, a vision single as

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the Cyclops' and saw here another threat to their Church. They joined Murray in rebellion and sent feverish prayers to Elizabeth to come over into Caledonia and help them.

Elizabeth replied by sending into Scotland an envoy called Tomworth, who was to urge Mary to deal gently with Murray ; and when Tomworth was received at the Scottish court he learnt that Murray had already been put to the horn. He pleaded for other of the rebels—Chatelherault, Argyll, and Rothes—and was amazed by Mary's implacable determination to punish them. The woman who had fallen into the English trap and married the pink-faced boy who baited it was now mistress of herself and like to be mistress of her kingdom. She was unmoved by Tomworth's arguments, and she was resolute that Elizabeth should not meddle in Scottish affairs.

She gathered an army. Six or seven thousand men came to her standard at the hint of trouble, and she mobilised more when the situation matured. She outlawed Rothes, Kirkcaldy of Grange, and the Provost of Dundee, because they would not take orders from her. She released from prison Lord Gordon, heir to old Huntly whom she had harried to his death four years before, and restored to him his

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father's dignities. She recalled from exile James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell, that wild and restless man whose gallantry by and by turned sour and made a villain of him. She prepared for casualties, she swore she would rather lose her crown than forgo revenge on Murray, and with that flamboyance and that careful preparation she took the field.

The campaign that followed was all riding and no fighting, chasing here and there, pursuing rumours and marching against echoes. The Queen's force left Edinburgh for the west, returned when word came that Murray and twelve hundred horse had entered the capital, missed the swiftly fleeing rebels, found themselves in Callendar, marched to Glasgow, prepared to go eastwards again, came to St. Andrews, exacted fines from Perth and Dundee, and returned to Edinburgh with numbers somewhat diminished by desertion though unscathed by battle. Mary was short of money. She pawned her jewels to pay her troops, and Dundee, Perth, St. Andrews, and Edinburgh also contributed, under compulsion, to their maintenance. But the rebels were worse off, despite a subsidy from Elizabeth, who at one time had even promised them three hundred soldiers—but repented of her offer before it

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materialised. And Mary, ignoring her difficulties, was still undismayed, still most warlike in spirit. Operations were sometimes conducted in vile weather. There was a notable march in the early days of the campaign when the army, rising long before sunrise, set out in the teeth of a tempest of rain and wind. Little brooks were swollen to rivers before them, and divers persons were drowned in the water of Carron. But though many fell weary, the Queen's courage increased. She was always in the lead, thrusting herself against the storm, tireless in pursuit. War and foul weather toughened her sinews, and danger exalted her spirit. It is easy to think of Mary listening to music, writing her accomplished letters, busy at her embroidering frame with bright silk in her fingers : it is not difficult to imagine her with the four Maries about her, talking to an ambassador, or—less skilfully than Elizabeth—playing on the virginals : but to see her whole it is also necessary to see her all a cold day in the saddle while the rain washed white her soldiers' leather coats, and the rain beat on her grave and lovely mouth, and her golden eyes shone, as if at a dance, to watch the skirts of the rain shaken over dark moors.

The rebel Lords fled into England, and Mary

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chased them to the Border with an unruly army. Huntly's Gordons were there, who went campaigning in holiday mood and had no more love for discipline than for Murray. Mary enjoyed herself too. She wore a secret coat of mail, a steel cap on her head, and had a pistol at her saddle. It is not improbable that her energy was maintained by delight in going thus armed as much as by her hatred of Murray.

And Murray found in England a proper traitor's reward, for when he came to London—the other Lords cautiously remaining at Newcastle—Elizabeth met him with scorn and a cold repudiation of the promises she had made. She had never intended to help the rebels: 'She never meant any such thing in that way,' she said.

'Madam,' answered the Earl, 'whatsoever thing your Majesty meant in your heart, we are thereof ignorant; but this much we know assuredly, that we had lately faithful promises of aid and support by your Ambassador and familiar servants, in your name; and further, we have your own handwriting, confirming the said promises.'

So at least declares one authority,¹ and lets

¹ Knox's Continuator.

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Murray take his leave with dignity. But another¹ says that he and the Abbot of Kilwinning, his companion, were made to kneel and confess before the ambassadors of France and Spain that Elizabeth had never encouraged them to oppose their Queen and her marriage. Whereafter Elizabeth, mindful of her audience, observed in the righteous voice befitting such a handsome lie : ‘ Now you have told the truth ; for I nor none in my name stirred you up against your Queen ; for your abominable treason might serve for example, to move my own subjects to rebel against me. Therefore pack you out of my presence ; ye are but unworthy traitors.’

Elizabeth’s reluctance to establish, by keeping her word, a dangerous precedent in statecraft, was a definite factor in the collapse of Murray’s rebellion, but more important, because they were positive factors, were Mary’s vigour in conducting the campaign against him, and her success in first persuading her Protestant subjects that their faith would take no harm from the mild Catholic complexion of the King. The repeated assurances of this that she gave them are particularly interesting, because they were closely followed by less public reiterations

¹ Melville.

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of her own loyalty to the Catholic Church so stout and determined that they have been interpreted as indicating her ultimate intention, no matter what she told the Congregation, to re-establish Catholicism in Scotland.

The Pope granted a dispensation for her marriage to Darnley, and Mary promised to defend the Roman faith to the utmost of her power. When the insurrection of the Protestant Lords threatened her safety, she wrote to the King of Spain begging his help to save the Catholic religion from ruin in Scotland. She convoked a brief Parliament, and on its dispersal she informed her ambassador in France that something had been done towards restoring 'the auld religion.'—Yet she had stated by proclamation that the purpose of this Parliament was to abolish and put away 'all acts, laws, and constitutions, canon, civil, or municipal,' prejudicial to the Reformed Church.

It would be idle to deny that here is evidence of a certain duplicity. It would equally be foolish to assert that here is evidence that Mary was contemplating a Catholic *coup d'état*. Had she desired to thrust Scotland back into the Pope's livery—to splash the barn-like churches of the Reformers with cardinal's red

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—she would never have crushed old Huntly and the Catholic north ; and the explanation of these politic addresses to France and Spain and the Holy See lies surely in one of the primary tenets of diplomacy, that it is better to keep a friend than to make an enemy. And though Mary was hardly candid or ingenuous in her assertions to the Pope and her cousins of France and Spain, she was not really dishonest, and perhaps not even guilty of deceit. She was honestly determined to defend the Catholic faith in her own person : that was the true solid base of her assertions. It is not improbable that she hoped to encourage a genuine religious tolerance in Scotland : there is a buttress for the assertions. And if her language were disingenuous, the Pope and her cousins would not expect the language of a fellow-sovereign to be anything else : and there is justification for assertions far more specious than hers.

One cannot too often repeat that Mary was a sovereign queen, bred to be and determined to continue a sovereign, primarily of Scotland, ultimately, in herself or by her issue, of England as well. Elizabeth was better aware of this than some of her historians have been, and if anyone cares to defend Elizabeth in the matter of

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her double-dealing—but Elizabeth was successful and so needs no other justification—then sufficient defence would be to say that she recognised Mary's ambition and realised Mary's determination. As regards Murray's rebellion, Elizabeth dealt crookedly both with Mary and her brother ; but Mary herself used no rustic simplicity towards Elizabeth, for she was coaxing and expostulatory in turn, and then most politically thought of inspiring disaffection in Ireland. Mary and Elizabeth were alike in this, that both were queens—queens of the Renaissance—and both held that a queen's part was to rule, and each suspected that the welfare of her subjects might be one of the aims of government.

But Mary's hostility to Murray cannot wholly be ascribed to his threat against the throne. Her enmity had a private face, and the rumour spread that Murray had surprised his sister in some secret and abominable conduct, and for this knowledge she hated him. Rumour hardened and grew more specific. It was whispered that Mary had taken Riccio for her lover, and that Murray knew this, and his knowledge was the reason for her bitterness against him. The explanation was apparently considered, by some few persons,

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plausible at the time, and certain people have since found it plausible. But an explanation that is surely as reasonable, though perhaps less interesting, lies in the supposition that Murray had, in error or in malice, accused his sister of misconduct, and indignation, not fear of denunciation, occasioned her enmity. Those who hold that Mary was guilty of everything but innocence may not be impressed by this suggestion ; but still it is a fact that injured innocence may show a front not less angry than iniquity unveiled.

VI

THAT doubt is still cast on the innocence of Mary's relations with Riccio is natural enough considering the lewd confessions that pass for evidence about her and by which she has been so often judged : a wanton queen must be wanton on every possible occasion, even with a low-born misshapen Italian so swarthy and so brow-beaten by fortune that he was thought to be some fifty years old, though after his murder it was stated he was no more than twenty-eight. And indeed it is no case for a woman's innocence to say that her suspected paramour was meagre in size, black about the jowl, twisted in his body, and prematurely weathered by time. A good voice, a pretty wit, and a kind understanding can easily and always overcome such trivial handicaps. But if Mary was not a wanton with others, would she wanton with Seigneur Davie for his sweet singing, his sympathy, and his wisdom? There is contemporary correspondence that circumspectly repeats such muttered gossip of the time, but gossip is judged by the company it keeps, and a

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rumour that Mary has taken Riccio for her lover must be discounted when its disseminators are tetchy Scots Lords, furiously angry that their Queen should prefer the company of a foreign adventurer to their own well-born *gaucheries*.

It is true that Riccio was often in the Queen's company. Mary made no concealment of her friendship for him.* It is a common frailty to want friends, and there were few whom Mary could make her friends. But to believe that because she made Riccio her friend she made Riccio her lover is to ignore what is most surely known of her. One must remember the years between Francis's death and her marriage to Darnley : her reputation of those years is unsullied. One must remember her nineteen years' imprisonment in England, and remember that England had more mettlesome young men than Scotland, and more enterprising men of vigorous middle age ; if Mary had wanted lovers during her loose incarceration at Bolton and Sheffield she could have found them. But there is no word of intrigue in all those years.¹ And her two adult marriages were

¹ At one time a scandal was circulated by Lady Shrewsbury ; but after some little while she herself admitted that her story was fiction.

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both such miserable failures that there is reason to suspect her disinclination or at least her indifference to the conjugal office.

Darnley was essentially light-minded and unreliable. But if Mary had been the accomplished or even the enthusiastic bed-mate that she is often believed to have been, she could surely have retained his loyalty for six months : which she failed to do. And when Bothwell, an experienced and enthusiastic lover, neglected her for his divorced wife within a few days of their wedding, it seems not improbable that Mary was less complaisant than Eve in accepting the 'rites mysterious of connubial love.' Her pillow-whispering, it may be, went to a platonic tune: 'So angels love.' And imagination needs no ear-trumpet to hear Bothwell answer :—

' So let them love for me !
When I'm all soul, such shall my love too be.
Who nothing here but like a spirit would do,
In a short time, believe't, will *be* one too.'

He became irascibly conscious that time's winged chariot was drawing near, and went back to Lady Jean with the realisation that she could do more than Mary to drown the rumble of its wheels.

Unless Mary was truly a wanton—and opposed to so much contrary evidence there

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is merely the evidence of convicted liars—there can be no foundation for the belief that Riccio was her lover. That she was impolitic in admitting him to a close friendship must, however, be granted. Riccio was not only a foreigner of undistinguished origin, but also a Catholic and so, in all probability, an emissary of the Pope—at least it was convenient to believe so. It was said that Riccio was to be made Chancellor in Morton's place : it became known that he had counselled Mary to refuse Darnley the Crown Matrimonial : and after that the conspiracy against him grew quickly and naturally as green ears in a wet stook.

There are three factors to consider. Murray and the other rebellious Lords were waiting, without pleasure at the prospect, to hear themselves declared guilty of *lèse-majesté* and to be forfeit in life, land, and goods ; Darnley, very angry at being refused the Crown Matrimonial, and jealous of Riccio's influence, was in a mood to accept any allies who would promise him the former and help him to destroy the latter ; while Riccio, already an ideal candidate for murder by reason of his Catholicism, his foreignness, and his undue authority, further recommended himself for death because his nearness to the Queen was

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an excuse for saying that he had stained her honour, and because a leaguc against him would be the opportunity for some profitable exchanges between Darnley and the defeated Lords. Though Riccio had been compact of all virtues, his life would still have had no more security of tenure than the last block that stays the launching of a ship.

An agreement was made between Darnley and the Earls of Morton, Argyll, Glencairn, and Rothes, and Lords Boyd and Ochiltree, by which these noblemen promised to become true servants of Darnley, to support him loyally in all his actions, causes, and quarrels, and to secure for him the Crown Matrimonial and succession to the throne ; while on his part Darnley promised to obtain a pardon for all their faults and crimes, no matter of what nature, to restore to them their estates and benefices, and to permit no Parliamentary accusation against them or forfeitures such as were threatened. A second agreement was drawn up, in which Darnley accepted responsibility for Riccio's murder. This was not magnanimity on his part, but a condition exacted by Morton and Ruthven when they discovered that Darnley, to humble the Queen, insisted that Riccio should be seized in her

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presence. The bond was composed with unction and phrased with a rich hypocrisy : ' We, Henry, by the grace of God, King of Scotland, and husband to the Queen's Majesty, for so much we having consideration of the gentle and good nature, with many other good qualities in her Majesty, we have thought pity, and also think it great conscience to us that are her husband, to suffer her to be abused or seduced by certain privy persons, wicked and ungodly—especially a stranger Italian called Davie—we have devised to take these privy persons, enemies to her Majesty, us, the nobility and commonwealth, to punish them according to their demerits, and in case of any difficulty to cut them off immediately, and to take and slay them wherever it happeneth.'

The Parliament summoned to proclaim banishment and forfeiture against the rebel Lords was to meet on March 12th. On March 9th, at Holyrood House, Darnley played at tennis with Riccio. When darkness fell the palace was occupied by troops under the command of Morton and Lindsay. That evening the Queen supped with the Countess of Argyll, her half-brother, the Commendator of Holyrood, and other members of the house-

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hold. The Earls of Huntly, Bothwell, and Atholl were elsewhere in the palace. The supper-party was small and quiet, partly because it was Lent, partly because the Queen was seven months pregnant. There had been some music—Riccio sang for the last time—and the Queen, for her motherhood's sake, ate meat in despite of the season. It was a truly domestic occasion, with a husband's empty chair to add freedom or suspense, for Darnley was with Lindsay and Lord Ruthven, who lay ill in bed.

Presently Darnley came in and took the vacant chair by the Queen's side. He was followed by Ruthven, risen from his sick-bed and wearing armour above his night-gown. This spectacle of debilitated ferocity, allied with Ruthven's sinister reputation as a warlock, must have had a devastating effect on the supper-party. It is interesting to consider what would be one's own nervous reaction to so grotesque yet deadly an apparition, though the infrequency, in these days, with which the prospect of demise is presented with such macabre flamboyance makes speculation difficult. Apparently Riccio had little time for doubt as to Ruthven's intention, and none to compose his mind for death. Mary, in

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addition to grief for her friend and the insult to her sovereignty, suffered anxiety for her own life, since the rout of conspirators whom Ruthven heralded were careless with their weapons and promiscuous in their menace.

They crowded the Queen's chamber, and Riccio fled for protection to her who, in return for his singing and his wisdom and his friendship, had befriended him. It is impossible to disentangle from a confusion of narratives the precise details of what followed. Mary herself wrote that Riccio took shelter behind her, and the conspirators 'cast down our table upon ourself, put violent hands on him, struck him over our shoulders with whingers, one part of them standing before our faces with bended daggs, most cruelly took him forth of our cabinet, and at the entry of our chamber gave him fifty-six strokes with whingers and swords, in doing whereof we were not only struck with great dread, but also by sundry considerations, were most justly induced to take extreme fear of our life.' Afterwards she is said to have declared that some threatened her with pistols held to her womb, and that blows struck at David passed so near her throat that she felt the coldness of the iron ; elsewhere it is denied that David

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was wounded even once in her presence, but was decently hustled away and killed by an outer door ; Melville says that the poor Italian was dragged from the Queen uttering great skirls and cries ; and till comparatively recent times there were stains on the floor of the invaded room that many—some of no mean intelligence—believed to be Riccio's blood. Ruthven said that, by Darnley's command, ' Davie was hurled down the steps of the stairs from the place where he was slain, and brought to the porter's lodge ; where the porter's servant taking off his clothes, said, 'This hath been his destiny ; for upon this chest was his first bed when he entered into this place, and now here he lieth again, a very ingrate and misknowing knave.'

However it happened, Davie was dead, and whether he lay on a chest or on the pavement, whether he had died howling at the Queen's skirts or speechless in the outer hall, was of small importance compared with the plight in which Mary herself was left. Ruthven, Morton, and Lindsay were in command of the palace, and the spilling of Riccio's blood had not sweetened their manners. They soon showed their contempt for Darnley, their distrust of his word. When the Provost and

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townsmen, alarmed by a wild hammering on the common bell, came speedily to Holyrood, armed and torch-lit, clamouring to know what was amiss, Mary was forbidden to speak to them under threat of being cut into collops and thrown over the wall. But Darnley was sent out to quieten them with a reassurance of her safety.

Huntly, Bothwell, and Atholl, the Queen's friends, made, it appears, some demonstration against the high-handed behaviour of the conspirators ; but their protest was ineffective in face of Morton's large garrison, and being powerless within the palace they were forbidden to leave it. By the help of fortune, a ruse and a rope, confusion among their captors, or some other benevolent catenation of circumstances, they succeeded, however, in making their escape from a window.

Mary, then, was virtually alone. Scotland's anointed queen was in a plight known to all the heroines of improbable romance from Ariadne to the slender artefacts designed for the weekly stimulation of youthful minds to-day—with the additional burden, unusual in romantic narration, of a seven months' pregnancy ; and with ingenuity equal to Ariadne's, with a truly theatrical command of fate, she

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baffled her enemies, eluded them, fled from them, and galloped into triumphant freedom.

It appears that she mastered her grief with commendable determination. She uttered a threat or two, variously reported. 'No more tears ; I will think upon a revenge,' says one historian.¹ Ruthven declares that she told Darnley she would never be content 'till I gar you have as sore a heart as I have presently.' And according to Nau, some time her secretary, there was a conversation the following morning in which Darnley protested his sorrow and regret for what had happened, and Mary answered, 'You have done me such wrong, that neither the recollection of our early friendship, nor all the hope you can give me of the future, can ever make me forget it.' It would indeed have been strange had she not spoken in this vein. A woman of less spirit than hers might have made more violent assertions. They show very truly her grief and her rage, but to take them as the prelude to Darnley's death at Kirk o' Field is surely the indication of a very remarkable worldly innocence. It is not every spark that sets a house on fire.

None of the Queen's ladies was permitted

¹ Spottiswoode.

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to be with her that night, and for the following day, which was Sunday, Ruthven again ordered that she should be left in solitude. That morning Darnley uttered a proclamation in his own name, at the Market Cross, commanding the lords and prelates of the Parliament immediately to leave Edinburgh. Later he visited the Queen, and, either of his own clemency or yielding to her importunacy, secured Ruthven's permission for her ladies again to attend her. Doubtless she found their presence comforting, but she also made it useful, for with the help of Lady Huntly—widow of the turbulent fat earl who died at Corrichie—she established communication with Bothwell and young Huntly. It seems probable, too, that she began to inspire in Darnley some doubt of his wisdom in putting himself so completely into the hands of Ruthven and Morton.

The Earl of Murray came to Holyrood that night, and was moved to affectionate tears by his sister's sorrow. Mary was glad to see him. She had no cause to trust him, but she said, and probably believed—and perhaps she was right to believe—that 'in case he had been at home, he would not have suffered her to have been so uncourteously handled.' And Murray protested his innocence, and swore by God that

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he knew nothing of David's murder till his return.¹ Then for the space of an hour Mary walked in her chamber, hand-in-hand with Murray on the one side and Darnley on the other.

On the following morning Darnley began to negotiate on behalf of the conspirators, to obtain remission of the sentence of banishment for such as had previously incurred it, and pardon for the more recent crime. Mary was complaisant and promised a politic forgetfulness of all that had happened. Darnley was easily convinced of her sincerity, but Ruthven, Morton, and Lindsay were less credulous. They came to the Queen themselves, and she promised again to 'bury and put all things in oblivion as if they had never been,' and told them 'to make their own security in that sort they pleased best, and she should subscribe the same.'

The document they prepared she tactfully approved, and diplomatically postponed her signature till the morning. In the meantime she secured the withdrawal of her guard, either by gentle words to Lethington, whom she had sent for, or by Darnley's intermediacy. The task, whoever performed it, was made

¹ Nau.

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easier by the Queen's skilful dissimulation of the critical weakness likely to assail an expectant mother under the strain of such excitement. And she seduced her husband from his dubious friends. She woke in him an emotional readiness to listen to her by expatiating on the misery into which she had been thrust, and she prophesied clearly to him his own wretched fate should he persist in his present alliance with Ruthven and Morton. She warned him how unfavourably his abnegation of Rome—a course prescribed for him by the Lords—would be received by their fellow-sovereigns on the Continent. She bent, in fact, the reed that he was, and in her own words 'he was induced to condescend to the purpose taken by us, and to retire in our company to Dunbar, which we did under night.'

This retiral, that she refers to so demurely in her letter to the Archbishop of Glasgow, consisted in the stealthy descent of a secret stairway, a hurried passage by kitchens and through a cemetery, the mounting of horses at the cemetery gates, and five hours' riding. The Queen rode pillion behind Arthur Erskine, esquire of her stables. She was accompanied by one of her ladies, Traquair, a servant called Bastian, and—as far as Seton—by Darnley.

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But at Seton they encountered some horsemen who, though they were of Mary's party, so frightened Darnley that he bade Erskine gallop, and when the Queen reminded him of her condition, replied ungently that another child could be begotten though that one died, put spurs to his horse, and left her. Presently Bothwell and Huntly met her, and with their escort she came in time to Dunbar, and was safe.

VII

MARY had effected her escape like an accomplished heroine of romance : she now proceeded, with the diplomacy of a great queen, to chasten the rump of rebellion and pacify those whom it was politic to soothe. Morton, Ruthven, and others were denounced as rebels and put to the horn. Six weeks later Ruthven died in Newcastle, unwept. Murray, Argyll, and their associates were pardoned. A man called Scott, the sheriff-depute of Perth, was hanged, drawn, and quartered at the Market Cross for the gaoler's part he had played at Holyrood ; and at the same time the Queen was moved with mercy and gave their lives to two Edinburgh burgesses condemned to the same punishment. John Knox withdrew into Ayrshire, to the noise of lamentation from the godly, and Mary did nothing to hinder his flight. There is no real evidence that he was connected with the murder—though afterwards he proclaimed his warm approval of it—and his defence would only have been a very tedious sermon on the usual texts.

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But all this was minor diplomacy compared with Mary's handling of Darnley and her cousin Elizabeth. The Lords who had been Darnley's fellow-conspirators, and whom he had deserted, revenged themselves on him by showing Mary the two documents he had signed : the one bearing his authority for Riccio's murder, the other declaring his intention to secure, by their help, the Crown Matrimonial. Yet Mary publicly accepted his poor protestations of innocence regarding the major crimes ; accepted for verisimilitude his plea of guilty to bringing home Murray, Glencairn, and Rothes, and condoned this indiscretion ; and contented herself with warning Murray and Argyll, now restored to favour, against believing what Darnley would have to say when he endeavoured (as she knew he would) once more to ingratiate himself with them.

And Queen Elizabeth, angered by the discovery of her share in Murray's rebellion, was soothed most skilfully. Evidence was obtained that through Randolph, the English envoy, the rebels had been subsidised to the extent of three thousand crowns. Randolph was accordingly dismissed and ordered out of Scotland : but Mary, at the same time, assured her cousin

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that she fully accepted her protestations of innocence, and offered the emollient explanation that Randolph must have been acting on his own responsibility and contrary to the wishes of his Queen. Then, when Elizabeth still complained of her minister's dismissal, and threatened that if Mary would not pardon the Earl of Murray she would receive him into her own favour, Mary, having already most wisely forgiven Murray, Argyll, and their associates for reasons of her own, blandly declared that she had been persuaded to do so by Elizabeth's petition. One of her good reasons had been that Argyll was friends with O'Neil, the Irish rebel or patriot, brewer of trouble and thorn in England's flesh ; and thereafter Mary encouraged Argyll in his friendship, and offered some pleasant personal assistance to O'Neil in the matter of a marriage.

Mary worked hard to restore peace in Scotland with the special purpose of winning security for her child when it should be born ; for she knew that Darnley, even if he were willing, would be unable to protect it. The rival Lords were therefore persuaded into a semblance of friendship, Atholl and Argyll were reconciled, Huntly and Bothwell made peace with Murray. Later [she restored Lethington

to favour ; and Darnley she treated with kindness and sagacity, evading the infelicity that his presence created with such dismal regularity by sedulously refraining from hindering him in his occupation with sport. In fowling and hunting he seems to have taken a really intelligent interest, and the pursuit of game most happily kept him out of the Council chamber. The place in history of stags, salmon, and partridges is still but scantily realised, and Darnley was only one of many princes whom they have most benevolently deterred from constant interference with human affairs. Perhaps in his absence Mary could comfort herself with sentimental memories of their early love. She still appeared to entertain some hope that in time his wit and temper would improve, and the inventory she made for the disposition of her goods, should she die in childbirth, specified some fifteen articles bequeathed to him, including a diamond ring enamelled in red, with the marginal note : 'It was with this that I was married to the King, who gave it me.'

Prince James was born in Edinburgh Castle on June 19th, 1566, about ten o'clock in the morning, after a long and difficult labour. In the early afternoon Darnley came to see Mary and his son. She spoke to him in some excite-

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ment and with some bitterness. Twice she referred to the slander he had circulated about her and Riccio, and she permitted herself to taunt him, though mildly, with the defects of his own character. But four hours is scarcely sufficient time for a woman to compose herself, forget protracted travail, and the anxiety of a pregnancy so complicated with perilous incidents as Mary's.

'My lord,' she said, 'God has given you and me a son, begotten by none but you !'

The King blushed, and stooped to kiss the child.

She took the infant in her arms and said, 'My lord, here I protest to God, and as I shall answer to Him at the great day of judgment, this is your son and no other man's son ! And I am desirous that all here, with ladies and others, bear witness ; for he is so much your own son that I fear it will be the worse for him hereafter !'

Then excitement gave words to her dominant ambition and a certain foreboding. She said to Sir William Stanley, 'This is the son who (I hope) shall first unite the two kingdoms of Scotland and England.'

'Why, Madam, shall he succeed before your Majesty and his father ?' asked Stanley.

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‘Because his father has broken to me,’ said Mary.

‘Sweet Madam,’ said Darnley, ‘is this your promise that you made to forgive and forget all?’

‘I have forgiven all, but will never forget,’ said Mary. ‘What if Fauldonside’s¹ pistol had shot, what would have become of him and me both? or what estate would you have been in? God only knows; but we may suspect.’

‘Madam,’ answered the King, ‘these things are all past.’

‘Then,’ said the Queen, ‘let them go.’²

Peals of ordnance, a multitude of bonfires, and popular acclamation followed the birth of the Prince. Messengers were sent hastily into France and England. Queen Elizabeth was at Greenwich, dancing after supper, when Melville arrived in London with the news. Cecil told the Queen, and her merriment suddenly disappeared. She exclaimed to her ladies that the Queen of Scotland was lighter of a fair son, and she was but a barren stock. Yet by the following morning a queenly

¹ It was Fauldonside who threatened Mary with a pistol in the turmoil of Riccio’s murder.

² Herries’s *Memoirs*.

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equanimity and most politic courtesy had displaced her jealousy, and when Melville had audience with her she told him that the joyful news of her sister's delivery had recovered her out of a heavy sickness which had held her for fifteen days.

Melville himself suffered little from the handicap of simplicity, and he appears to have had a pleasant understanding of the two queens. He told Elizabeth that Mary had hastened him southwards, knowing that her cousin would be, among all her friends, the gladdest to have the good news of the Prince's birth, though it was dearly bought with peril of his mother's life. He mentioned that Mary had been so sorely handled in labour that she wished she had never married : and this, he explains in his *Memoirs*, 'I said to give her a little scare to marry, by the way.' For Elizabeth, when pressed to declare Mary her successor, was still inclined to talk about her own suitors, their offers, and the implications thereof.

Then Melville asked if Elizabeth would be godmother to the Prince ; and Elizabeth consented.

For some while the Queen's peace continued in Scotland, and the nobles lived amiably

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together. M. le Croc, the French ambassador, wrote : ' I never saw her Majesty so much beloved, esteemed, and honoured ; nor so great a harmony amongst all her subjects, as at present is by her wise conduct, for I cannot perceive the smallest difference or division.' There were, however, two discordant elements in the harmony that Mary had so cleverly established, one actual and the other potential.

The actual one was Darnley. Offensive to all, trusted by none, constant only in jealousy, coarse in language and delicate in brain, he was the Queen's worst enemy and she would have been well advised to treat him as such. But she was incapable of using him with this cold wisdom, and her statecraft was betrayed by solicitude for the welfare of the contemptible creature whose fortune had been to win some time her love and to father her child. In a period of half-witted desperation Darnley decided that he could no longer live in Scotland and would remove to France. Lennox, his father, wrote to Mary praying her to use her influence to divert him from this foolish project, and in the presence of her Council the Queen talked with him earnestly and frankly.

She took him by the hand and urged him for God's sake to say whether she had given

him any cause for this decision. She bade him speak plainly and not spare her feelings. From the Lords there followed, in politic chorus, protestations of innocence similar to the Queen's except in their lack of sincerity ; and M. le Croc smoothly explained the double danger of a flight into France that, if it did not reflect on Darnley's honour, would certainly asperse the Queen's.

Confronted by this unanimous jury—the injured Queen, the politic Lords, and the bland Ambassador—Darnley's grievance failed to find words, and at last he admitted that there was no argument for his improper plan. Self-pity gave him a shred of dignity to clothe his exit : ‘ Adieu, Madam,’ he said, ‘ you shall not see my face for a long space.’

The other disruptive element—undeclared as yet—in the transient peace was Bothwell, who had been of such material assistance to the Queen in Murray's rebellion and the Riccio plot. Now his stature grew and his shadow lengthened over Scotland. He had been appointed Lieutenant-General of the East, Middle, and West Marches. He had been restored to his hereditary office of Lord High Admiral. He was enriched with estates and flattered by the Queen's friendship. She

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went by sea from Newhaven to Alloa, thereby causing great scandal—later, that is, when the need grew for calumny—because she embarked in a ship manned by Bothwell's 'famous robberis and pyrates.' The robbers and pirates were presumably in Bothwell's command as High Admiral, and sufficient reason for her voyage lay in her fondness of sailing. There is a charming reference to her that says 'she joyit to handill the boysterous cabilis.' What laudable enjoyment! Yet this holiday spirit was construed by her enemies into licentious behaviour, and her brief residence in Alloa gave rise to wild and slanderous tales. Almost all that one does know for certain about her stay there is that she heard of the eviction of a poor woman from her cottage, and wrote to the Laird of Abercairney protesting against his action in violently ejecting her 'with a company of poor bairns forth of her kindly room,' and desiring him to 'show some favour and accept them in their steading as ye have done in times bygone.'

In October the Queen had an adventure with which Bothwell was again concerned. She rode to Jedburgh to be present at a Justice Court, and while there she heard that Bothwell had been seriously hurt while endeavour-

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ing to arrest a certain John Elliot of the Park. The encounter had been spirited. Bothwell fired with a pistol, hit Elliot in the body, but himself fell wounded. The said John, 'perceiving himself shot,' as a contemporary historian pleasingly puts it, then gave the prostrate Bothwell three more wounds, received two himself from Bothwell's hanger, and departed, leaving the Lord High Admiral in a swoon. Presently his servants arrived and carried him to the Hermitage.

In view of his serious condition Mary was advised to visit him, which she did with greater precipitancy than her advisers probably expected. The distance from Jedburgh to the Hermitage is rather more than thirty miles, and Mary rode there and back in a day, accompanied by Murray and some others. The journey was not without danger—the behaviour of John Elliot of the Park is a happy illustration of Border manners—but Mary accomplished it outwardly unhurt. Unfortunately the fatigue of hurriedly riding sixty miles was not so easily avoided as the Elliots, and after returning to Jedburgh she fell seriously ill.

Her state seemed desperate, and desperate remedies were adopted. She swooned and

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she vomited, and to cure her they laid violent hands on her, rubbing her legs and pulling her arms, on one occasion for four hours together, till life reluctantly returned. Early on a Friday she lay in a coma, but her French doctor, 'who is a perfect master of his craft, would not give the matter over in that manner, but of new began to draw her knees, legs, arms, feet, and the rest, with such vehement torments, which lasted the space of three hours.' Her legs were tightly bandagcd from the toes upwards, and wine was poured down her throat. Presently she recovered sight and speech, sweated profusely, and on the critical ninth day began to mend of her fever. Poison, thwarted desire for Bothwell, dislike for Darnley, and the night air she breathed on her long ride from the Hermitage, have all been blamed for her illness ; but considering a circumstantial account of her vomiting, it seems unnecessary to blame love or the baneful exhalation of the stars for an intestinal haemorrhage that the fatigue of riding might well have induced, that her treatment must have aggravated, and that could certainly result in such a general collapse as she suffered. If that is insufficient, the worry that Darnley caused her may be dignified with the title of an anxiety neurosis,

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and be held responsible for certain hysterical symptoms. Lethington, writing to Archbishop Beaton on the sixth day of her illness, declared : ' She has done him so great honour without the advice of her friends, and contrary to the advice of her subjects, and he on the other part has recompensed her with such ingratitude, and misuses himself so far towards her, that it is a heartbreak for her to think that he should be her husband, and how to be free of him she sees no outlet.'

Bothwell quickly grew better of his wounds, and came to Jedburgh a week before Darnley arrived. Darnley was slow in coming. Whether that was due to carelessness, indifference to the Queen's fate, or ignorance of her condition, it is difficult to determine. When he did come he stayed one night only, and apparently was not pressed to continue his visit.

Mary's convalescence was tedious and unwilling. She could not forget the grief that Darnley caused her, and she would often wish that she were dead. She contemplated suicide, or at least threatened it. But by December she had recovered sufficiently to arrange, with some magnificence and all the rites of the Roman Church, the baptism of

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her son. The ceremony took place in Stirling. Darnley, though living there at the time, was not present. Huntly, Bothwell, and Murray, for their religion's sake, stood at the church door. Queen Elizabeth, as godmother, had sent a handsome gold font that was big enough for the infant's immersion. It proved even more useful some six months later, when it was handed over to the mint.

VIII

As Borderers the Hepburns had the advantage of two countries to rob and raid in. This richness of opportunity encouraged them in restlessness, independence, and ambition; and Mary's Bothwell was not the first of his family to observe possibilities of fortune in a queen's petticoat. A Hepburn was the reputed lover of Mary of Gueldres, a Hepburn was the captor of Jane Beaufort, widow of James I.

In his very young manhood Bothwell had actively supported the fortunes of Mary's mother, Mary of Guise. Though a Protestant himself, he fought for her against the Protestant Lords, and is remembered for guerilla tactics and his interception of supplies from England. He travelled abroad, seduced a Norwegian lady, and in France impoverished his morals and improved his manners. He came back to Scotland, lively and quarrelsome, and discussed with Arran the possibilities of kidnapping their Queen. Arran told all—perhaps more than all—and Bothwell

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was confined on suspicion in Edinburgh Castle. He escaped, and was shortly recaptured by the English. In England he made a good impression, and when, by Mary's intercession, he received permission to proceed to France, he left behind a reputation for honourable and courteous behaviour. In 1565 he returned to Scotland without permission, but fled again before Murray's enmity, though it was apparent that the Queen bore him no ill-will. His fellow-Protestants were suspicious of her dormant favour, and feared that some day she would 'shake him out of her pocket' against them. Presently she did.

By October, 1565, Mary was said to 'place Bothwell in honour above every subject that she hath,' and after Riccio's murder and their escape from Holyrood he may well have shone like a good deed in a naughty world. A year later he 'carried all credit in the court,' and was well hated for it by many of the nobles. But the Queen's favour and most reasonable friendship, that were soon to be fantastically misconstrued, aroused no synchronous rumours of misconduct. The Privy Council, in September, 1566, told Darnley that he ought to thank God for giving him so wise and virtuous a wife : an admonition that hardly substan-

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tiates the description of her activities with which Buchanan subsequently provided her English judges. The story is worth repeating as an example of her enemies' inventive malice, and it is worth repeating now when it may be compared with the strictly contemporary opinion of the Privy Council.

For a little while the Queen lived in the Exchequer House in Edinburgh. It had pleasant gardens. One of Bothwell's servants had a house abutting on them. And the Queen had a lady-in-waiting : there are the elements of Buchanan's imaginative tale. The lady-in-waiting was Lady Reres, who, he says, with a refreshing lack of snobbery ' had from the gain of whoredom betaken herself to the craft of bawdry.' She had a good figure for the part, being ' very heavy, both by unwieldy age and massy substance.' And one night she conveyed Bothwell through the gardens to the Queen's chamber, and left him to rape her. Then, a few nights later, Mary, being converted by capture, summoned her bawd to bring Bothwell on a second visit, and assisted by Margaret Carwood, a woman privy to her secrets, let her down by a string over the wall into the next garden. But the string broke, and down tumbled the unwieldy age and the

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massy substance of Lady Reres. Nothing dismayed, up she got, ran to Bothwell's chamber, and dragged him half-asleep and half-naked out of his wife's arms, and brought him to the ardent Queen.

That is the *conte diolatique* with which Buchanan amused himself in the midst of his Latin studies ; and such was the malice waiting the Queen's downfall.

At this time, however, Bothwell was busy with people more important than Lady Reres. He became active on behalf of Morton and the other exiled confederates in the Riccio plot ; he assisted at the notable conference in Craigmillar Castle, when the possibility was discussed of obtaining a divorce for Mary. These conversations took place in December, prior to the Prince's baptism. According to the Earl of Huntly, Murray and Lethington were the first to consider the annulment of the Queen's marriage as a political measure ; and to them it seemed a useful bribe to persuade her to recall Morton and his friends from banishment. They won the sympathy of Argyll, Huntly, and Bothwell, and went together to interview the Queen. Lethington rehearsed the various offences of which Darnley was guilty, and pointed out that, so far from his

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showing any sign of improvement, his behaviour was becoming worse from day to day. Then he proposed his bargain, that in return for pardoning Morton, Lindsay, and their associates, he and the Lords would arrange the annulment of the royal marriage. It was not merely for the Queen's pleasure, but for the good of the country that they made this proposal, he said.

Murray and Argyll, Huntly and Bothwell, took up the tale and urged the Queen with divers arguments to consent. After hearing them she answered that under two conditions she might agree : that the divorce was legally obtained, and that it must not be prejudicial to her son. Otherwise, she said, she would prefer to endure till death all the torments and the prospects of danger that her present estate held for her.

Bothwell comfortably declared that there was no reason to suppose a divorce would be injurious to the child's prospects : he himself, he said, was the son of divorced parents, and he had suffered nothing from that trifling circumstance. Then Lethington said, ' We shall find the means that your Majesty shall be quit of him without prejudice of your son. And albeit that my lord of Murray here present be little

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less scrupulous for a Protestant, than your Grace is for a Papist, I am assured he will look through his fingers, and will behold our doings, saying nothing to the same.'

Now those words can be given a sinister interpretation, and many historians, in their anxiety to discover the eggs before revealing the chickens, have found in them a foreboding of Darnley's murder. But though they do not suggest any particular desire to ensure fair play for Darnley—this was before *British* began to assume an ethical connotation hostile to base expediency—Lethington's remarks can still be interpreted in other terms than murder; nor was Lethington the kind of man to make a public threat of assassination.

The Queen replied, 'I will that ye do nothing through which any spot may be laid upon my honour or conscience, and therefore I pray you, rather let the matter be in the condition that it is, abiding till God of His goodness put remedy thereto; lest you, believing that you are doing me a service, may possibly turn to my hurt and displeasure.'

'Madam,' said Lethington, 'let us guide the matter among us, and your Grace shall see nothing but good, and approved by Parliament.'

No steps were taken to secure the divorce,

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but on December 24th, a suitable occasion for benevolence, Mary pardoned Morton and seventy others implicated in Riccio's murder. It is said that Bothwell argued their cause in order to win their friendship,¹ and that it was he who secured remission of their sentences.² According to Melville, he had by then conceived the idea of murdering Darnley and marrying the Queen.

In January Darnley returned to Glasgow, where he fell seriously ill. His distemper has been variously diagnosed as poisoning, scabies, smallpox, and the other pox. The first suggestion is made by Buchanan ; the last depends on the anonymous evidence of an imperfectly identified skull ; a patient is rarely confined to bed by scabies ; and so one may reasonably choose smallpox for Darnley's new disease. While he lay sick the air bore rumours that he was plotting to crown Prince James and establish himself as regent. It was a mysterious rumour, not very circumstantial, but strong enough to find its way to France and echo home again. The *bruit* was enough to keep Mary from immediately joining Darnley—a course that her more sentimental detractors consider to have been her duty—and her dis-

¹ Melville.

² *Memorials of the Earls of Haddington.*

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inclination for travel was aggravated by a kicking horse. On January 20th she wrote to her ambassador in France protesting her goodwill to Darnley and complaining with some bitterness about his constant suspicion and hostility towards her. But on the very day of writing she set out for Glasgow, and by the end of the month she was back in Edinburgh and Darnley lay in Kirk o' Field.

A few days later he was murdered, and to explain his death many reputable historians have yielded to the smooth temptation of *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*. Mary went to Glasgow, they say, and brought Darnley back to Edinburgh ; in Edinburgh he was promptly assassinated ; therefore Mary was an accessory to the crime if not instigator of it. The innocent unworldliness of this reasoning will be apparent to all readers of detective stories, who know that a deliberate murderer does not so arrange a crime that suspicion will immediately and inevitably fall on himself. The curious neglect of a perfectly simple explanation will also be obvious to anyone who has encountered—and very few men have not—the female enthusiasm for nursing and women's zealous empiricism. Mary had already sat by Darn-

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ley's bed while he was bright-hued with measles and shuddering with an ague. To nurse him had become something of a habit. It is, moreover, notorious—at least in Edinburgh—that the air of Edinburgh is far healthier than that of Glasgow, and the prospects of convalescence there are correspondingly better. Her purpose, then, in conveying him to Kirk o' Field was simply to ensure for him treatment under her own supervision in a neighbourhood that was, so she believed, exceptionally favourable to recovery. That Darnley, once he was well again, would behave as objectionably as before, was a fact she lost sight of in view of the more immediate opportunity of demonstrating her therapeutic skill and her sex's traditional command over a sick-bed. Darnley was neither the first nor the last husband temporarily to regain his wife's affection by falling ill.

It may be argued, however, that Kirk o' Field, being somewhat lonely and dilapidated, was a house more suited for murder than for medicine ; why, then, did Mary make a choice of it ? The answer is that she did not. There is reason to believe that it was Darnley himself who selected Kirk o' Field as his residence. Mary had intended him to lie at Craigmillar

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Castle,¹ but Darnley, being sensitive about his appearance, wanted to see no one until he was cured.² He wore a taffeta mask to conceal the ravages of his disease. Melville says that he chose Kirk o' Field because, in addition to a situation removed from the politer life of Edinburgh, it had gardens and was in a good healthy position.

Now there is a domestic detail, small enough, but of some interest in connexion with this assumption that Mary's behaviour was simply dictated by a womanly zeal for nursing: in Darnley's room there was a new black bed, and this Mary had removed lest the splashing of his bath should spoil it, and substituted for it an old purple couch. Her enemies have assumed that this indicates her foreknowledge of his murder and her desire to save the new bed from destruction by the explosion. But surely to believe that requires the belief that Mary was not only a murderess but a mean and grasping murderess? That she would count the cost of killing, and tell Bothwell in what shop gunpowder was selling at bargain prices?

There is nothing in her history to substan-

¹ Nau, Crawford, and Nelson—one of Darnley's servants.

² Nau.

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tiate such a view. She was not parsimonious. The woman who pawned her jewels to pay her soldiers would not grudge a bedstead when it came to murdering her husband. But if Mary were behaving merely as a good wife would behave, the substitution of the beds is perfectly comprehensible. She was simply being sensible in a sound domestic way.

The house of Kirk o' Field consisted of a hall, two bedrooms, a cabinet, a wardrobe, a cellar, and a kitchen. It was only partly furnished. Darnley's room, on the upper floor, was hung with six pieces of tapestry taken from the Gordons after Corrichie. The floor was covered with a carpet, there were some red velvet cushions, a tall chair covered with purple velvet, a little table covered with green velvet, the old purple bed, and a bath having for its lid one of the doors of the house, taken off its hinges for that purpose. The Queen sat in this room and talked with Darnley. For two nights she slept in the room below, in a small bed of yellow and green damask with a fur coverlet.

On the evening of Sunday, February 9th, Mary was demonstratively affectionate to her husband. She intended to sleep at Kirk o' Field that night, but suddenly remembered

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she had promised to attend the wedding of her faithful servant Bastian, who had accompanied her escape from Holyrood after Riccio's murder. She gave Darnley a ring to comfort him in her absence, and left with an escort of torch-bearers. On her way out of the house she encountered one of Bothwell's men, named Paris, and noticed that his face was curiously dirty.

'Jesu, Paris, how begrimed you are !' she remarked.

Paris continued his task of carrying gunpowder into the house, and Mary rode to the wedding.

The explosion occurred in the early hours of the morning, and was of sufficient force entirely to demolish the building and to wake the whole town. Bothwell, having completed his work, quickly returned to the palace, and pretended great surprise when he was told the news. With a clumsy affectation of bewilderment he said that was the strangest accident that ever happened, that lightning should come out of the lift and burn the King's house. Darnley's body was not found in the ruins. It was discovered some distance from the house, with the body of a servant who had slept in the same room beside it. And the

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corpse was neither blackened nor burnt by the explosion. It showed no mark of violence, but a cloth was stuffed in the mouth—a serviette, says one ; the sleeves of his shirt, says another. Buchanan, with perhaps the instinct to mystify of a thwarted novelist, says that Darnley's clothes were neatly laid beside him.

‘Sa grevit and tormentit’ that she could attend to little business, Mary retired to a darkened chamber when she was told what had happened. But she wrote to the good Beaton in Paris stating her belief that the plot had been directed against her as well as Darnley, and declaring her intention to ‘take a rigorous vengeance of that mischievous deed, which as it should remain unpunished, we had rather lose life and all. . . . We hope to punish the same with such rigour as shall serve for example of this cruelty to all ages to come.’ She ascribed her escape to God’s providence, and offered a reward for information that would lead to detection of the murderers of two thousand pounds, an honest yearly rent, and free pardon in the event of the informer having been implicated in the crime.

Presently, under the darkness of night, voices were heard shouting that Bothwell was the

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murderer. Bills were stuck on the doors of the Tolbooth, of St. Giles and the Tron Kirk, on the Abbey Gate and the city ports, charging Bothwell and his friends with murder. Pictures of Bothwell were left in the streets with the rubric, 'Here is the murderer of the King.' And Bothwell walked abroad with fifty followers, fingering his dagger, a strange look on his face, and swore that if he discovered who had stuck up the bills he would wash his hands in their blood.

IX

AMONG male historians particularly there is a deep-rooted prejudice against women who wed their husbands' murderers, and Mary's marriage to Bothwell, three months after Darnley's death, has sensibly discoloured her reputation. The fact that she was not a free agent has been too often ignored. No one denies the possibility of a young man being forced into marriage—the spectre of a shot-gun wedding, or some polite equivalent of it, is in the mind of every male from adolescence onwards—but the idea that a young woman ever goes to the altar except by her own volition and for her own benefit has been almost excluded from consideration by the fable of Eve and the apples of Eden. The historians of a generation or two ago were often highly susceptible to moral indignation, and such people are peculiarly given to the superstition that only woman is endowed with positive free will—that a man can assert free will only by saying *No*—and that woman's will is always

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the same. Mary got married to Bothwell, they say ; therefore Mary wanted to get married. Had she been disinclined to share his pillow she could have remembered the virtuous Lucrece and escaped such unpleasantness with a bare bodkin.

But before assuming this lofty and somewhat impercipient attitude it is necessary to consider some relevant facts. It must be observed that Bothwell, for a little while, was master of southern Scotland ; it must be remembered that Mary had serious political reasons for desiring to live, principally the ambition to establish her dynasty, in the person of her son if not of herself, on the English throne ; and it must be admitted that there was no solid foundation for grief at Darnley's death, however much the manner of it might be deplored.

As well as being shocked by the tragedy, Mary was perturbed by fears for her own safety. Beaton, writing from Paris, warned her of danger ; Darnley, it is said, had told her that Lethington was plotting against her ; and Murray, her half-brother, behaved like a rat in a sinking ship. It is impossible to say when she discovered that Bothwell was her husband's murderer—suspicion may well have

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risen immediately—but that she was not long in doubt can hardly be disputed. Her duty as a queen was therefore to see him punished. Had she felt any uncertainty of this, her doubt must soon have been resolved by the many well-meaning people who, as people will, wrote sententious letters full of advice admirable in all ways except one: it could not be carried out. Beaton declared she must execute such justice on the murderers as would make manifest to the world her own innocence; Catherine de' Medici bade her revenge Darnley's death, or they in France would also become her enemies; Elizabeth expressed her horror at the crime and urged Mary to show what a noble princess and loyal wife she was; exhortations arrived from the Kirk; and old Lennox begged for justice against the murderers of his son.

Mary's duty was clear indeed; but even clearer was the fact that Bothwell was too powerful to be punished. On the eve of the murder Murray had conveniently left Edinburgh to visit his wife, and now he politically delayed his return. Three days before Bothwell's trial he went for a tactful holiday abroad. There was no one in Scotland strong enough to oppose the Border earl—Lennox cried out against him, but could do no more

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than cry—and so Mary must have realised that justice would have to be postponed. The question of her survival, however, had to be decided immediately, and her decision was influenced by two factors : one, a reason that will appeal to most people, her desire to live ; and two, her desire to guard the infant James and secure in him the political advancement of her house. She resolved to survive, and the only way to survive was to flatter Bothwell, to turn deaf ears to the voices that cried by night, and ignore the rude placards that accused him by day.

So Bothwell ruled the court, Bothwell acquired new grants, and Bothwell was given costly presents of furs and cloth of gold. Mary used him with all politeness in public ; she played golf with him, they practised archery together ; and he carried her sceptre when she rode to Parliament.

The ten weeks or so between Darnley's death and the raping at Dunbar were probably the most dramatic period in her life. It was a season charged and surcharged with suspense. Bothwell strove to consolidate his position, and Mary helped with the purpose of securing her own. She had no one to advise her. She stood alone. She had per-

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petually to control herself, to hide her emotion, to smile and make amiable gestures, and give gaiety and cordial tones to her voice. Fear was surely one of the agents that made her so good an actress: not horror, that numbs the spirit, but fear, that excites it. She felt horror, perhaps, in Bothwell's absence, but only fear in his presence. Horror belongs to contemplation of a crime rather than to actual association with the criminal. There is no need to think of Mary shrinking from Bothwell as from a leper, but she probably felt the taut anxiety of a young trainer alone in the cage with a lion that is showing signs of temper. Darnley's murderer was strong enough to be her master, and his ambition was not yet satisfied. But if she could survive, if she could win a waiting game against time and him, then fortune might change and be her ally. Bothwell himself might be tamed of certain exuberances and become her faithful minister. Did it matter how she ruled so long as her throne was secure, so long as Scotland was independent, and her son the heir of England?

During these weeks Holyrood must have been like a play by Webster—the air thick with suspicion, heavy with dread; night falling on possibilities of uncouth violence; jewels

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and furs, suave ceremony, and voices sharp with a promise of hysteria while they uttered their prettiest phrases. The actors were young enough for the most desperate tragedy : Mary was in her twenty-fifth year, Bothwell was something under thirty. (Darnley had died before he was twenty-one.) Mary, of course, was intellectually mature, but Bothwell, while capable of crude ingenuity, had scarcely a ripe or cultivated intelligence. He was a good example of what unruly youth might be with the assistance of aristocratic birth and a Scottish tendency to excess. He was energetic and physically courageous. But for statecraft he relied on kidnapping and persuading his fellow-nobles to sign bonds which they could subsequently repudiate. The incompetent extravagance with which he organised the Darnley murder—so much gunpowder for so little a thing as a man, and then to find a napkin more serviceable !—is very like English drama in its ebullient youth, or the exuberant multiplication of difficulties with which Tom Sawyer planned the escape of Jim the nigger from the wooden hut.

Lennox meanwhile continued to press for justice. He had sent Mary a list of those whom he charged with the murder, on which Both-

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well's name stood first. On April 12th, by consent of the accused—Bothwell sat with the Privy Council to arrange the proceedings—the trial took place. A representative of Lennox appeared as accuser. Lennox himself was not present. He had not had sufficient time to prepare his case, but this did not prevent him coming so much as the order forbidding him to bring into Edinburgh more than half-a-dozen of the three thousand retainers with whom he had started his journey. Bothwell, on the other hand, had quartered a small army in the town. He was accompanied to the Tolbooth by two hundred arquebusiers and four thousand gentlemen, an array of witnesses that no jury could be expected to ignore. The court sat for eight hours, but only the bare indictment was put before the jury, who returned the expected verdict, 'some for fear, and some for favour, and the most part for commodity,' as Melville observes.

Bothwell emphasised his acquittal by challenging to single combat anyone who disagreed with it. No one accepted the challenge. Parliament met four days later and ratified his appointment as Captain of Dunbar Castle in return for his 'great and manifold good service' to the state. It also prohibited under

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pain of severe penalties the publication by placards and bills of defamatory remarks about him.

A few days later he entertained a large company to supper in a tavern kept by a man called Ainslie, and persuaded them to sign a bond by which they asserted their belief in his innocence, their resolution to defend him against his enemies, and their willingness to promote his marriage to the Queen 'so far as it may please our said Sovereign Lady to allow.' Seven earls and a dozen lesser noblemen signed the bond. Huntly, Morton, Rothes, and Glencairn ; Boyd, Seton, Sinclair, Ogilvie, and Herries were among the signatories.

It must be stated, to Bothwell's credit, that he did not waste time. His supper-party took place on Saturday, April 19th. On Monday the Queen went to Stirling to see the infant James, who was in the keeping of the Earl of Mar. She set out on her return journey on Thursday, accompanied by a small force and a few friends, one of whom was Sir James Melville. A few miles from Edinburgh Bothwell suddenly appeared with four hundred troopers, who, with drawn swords, made clear their intention of capturing the Queen. Some

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of her small company were ready to defend her, but she stopped them, saying she was ready to go with Bothwell rather than provoke bloodshed and death.¹

This temperate acquiescence, dictated by a most humane desire to prevent the useless sacrifice of friendly lives, is evidently the fountain-head of the rumour that her capture was collusive. Had Mary been frankly brutal, had she encouraged her tiny bodyguard to commit glorious suicide on Bothwell's four hundred swords, she might have established thereby a name as stark as any in the stern roll of virtue. She seems rather to have thought of her soldiers' lives—and few reputations could stand against so grave a lack of judgment as that.

In captivity, however, she was not wholly passive. Bothwell took her to Dunbar, and from there she sent secret messages for help to the governor of the town and to the citizens of Edinburgh, who replied with a demonstration loyal enough but ineffectual. Bothwell was too strong to be assailed by unorganised forces. He had moved swiftly and taken the country by surprise, and celerity had given time—as much as he needed—to prosecute his

¹ *Spanish State Papers.*

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wooing. Fair words, physical strength, and suave intimidation were his lover's battery. In a pathetic letter to the Bishop of Dunblane, Mary wrote : ' Albeit we found his doings rude, yet were his answer and words but gentle.' Then he showed her the bond signed in Ainslie's tavern, with its seeming assurance that all Scotland desired and was prepared to acclaim their marriage in return for the Earl's ' former affectionate and hearty service.' ' We saw no esperance to be rid of him, never man in Scotland once making an attempt to procure our deliverance,' she wrote ; and so, ' we were compelled to mitigate our displeasure, and began to think upon that he propounded.' He extorted a part-promise from her, but even then would not agree to delay consummation of the marriage, ' but as by a bravado in the beginning he had won the first point, so ceased he never till by persuasions and importunate suit, accompanied not the less with force, he has finally driven us to end the work begun at such time and in such form as he thought might best serve his turn, wherein we cannot dissemble that he has used us otherwise than we would have wished, or yet have deserved at his hand.'

Mary's resistance was broken, but her spirit

did not entirely fail her. In utter misery she yet retained enough control to realise that she must 'mitigate her displeasure' and make the best of misfortune. Perhaps, anticipating Parolles, she declared, 'Simply the thing I am shall make me live'—and her ambition had still a habitation in the Prince.

There was an impediment to the marriage in the untoward circumstance that Bothwell had a wife. She was the Lady Jean Gordon, a sister of his friend the Earl of Huntly, whom he had married some fifteen months previously, leading her to the altar in a wedding-dress of cloth of silver lined with white taffeta that Mary had given her, and seating her at a wedding-banquet that Mary had provided. But a divorce was arranged on the plea of a conveniently remembered consanguinity, and the pretext—an equally remarkable discovery—of Bothwell's misconduct with a maid. Within ten days Lady Jean, a Catholic, had obtained judgment from the Protestant Commission, and Bothwell, a Protestant, had secured his decree from the Papal Court. (The ostentation of this double divorce is somewhat reminiscent of the excessive quantity of gunpowder used to blow up Kirk o' Field.) The return of Bothwell and Mary to Edinburgh,

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with Huntly, Lethington, and others in their train, was celebrated by salvoes from the castle guns, and Bothwell was presently created Duke of Orkney.

On May 15th, in the Old Chapel of Holyrood House, the marriage was celebrated according to Protestant rites by Adam, Bishop of Orkney, who has been described as 'a chameleon, a sorcerer and execrable magician, a perfect atheist.' That Mary, always a devout Catholic, should have submitted willingly to this Protestant service is quite incredible. 'There was neither pleasure nor pastime used, as was wont to be used when princes were married,'¹ nor in the brief season of her third marriage did Mary show signs of the rich contentment, the luxurious satisfaction that she must have felt if the common accusations against her are true. Her enemies say that she loved Bothwell most desperately, that she was privy to the murder of Darnley, and so came, by that and her marriage, to the consummation of her desire. But what actual record is there of eternity in their lips and eyes, of bliss in her brows' bent? Sir William Drury wrote to Cecil that the Queen and the Duke would ride abroad together and make an outward

¹ *Journal of Occurrences.*

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show of contentment ; that he would come bareheaded before her, and sometimes she would politely bid him be covered. Is this the behaviour of a Cleopatra new-joined to her Antony? Did they 'sleep day out of countenance and make the night light with drinking'? Is there any record in Holyrood of lamps that outburned Canopus? There is little in the story of their marriage but sighs and regret, jealousy, the contemplation of death, and—on Bothwell's part—hurried recourse to the consolations of adultery.

The Earl d'Aumale heard Mary call out for a knife to kill herself. M. du Croc observed with surprise her altered demeanour, and the Queen apologised for her lack of spirits, saying, 'If you see me melancholy, it is because I do not choose to be cheerful : because I never will be so, and wish for nothing but death.' Bothwell displayed a violent jealousy for which there was no valid reason save Mary's refusal of her love. His only rival was her constitutional delicacy, so he grew jealous of it, and to forget this uncomfortable emotion he spent several nights a week with Lady Jean.

Surely it requires stronger arguments, more skilful forgeries than any yet discovered, to persuade us that this was the flowering of a

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passionate love? A prettier tale would have been told if Mary had been of the mind that her accusers pretended. Kirkcaldy of Grange reported on hearsay that she had declared she would go with Bothwell to the world's end in a white petticoat ere she left him. Had she said this, and been so minded, there was no need for tears when he took her to Holyrood in a velvet gown. Kirkcaldy's informant may have been somewhat deaf, however. It is more likely that Mary had said that Bothwell would go to the world's end for a white petticoat; or that she, in hers, would go there before she *loved him*—not *left him*.

X

It was a deserted court that Mary ruled. Save Bothwell and the Earl of Crawford, Lethington was the only man of note who remained with her, and his fidelity may have been due to compulsion—he disliked Bothwell heartily—or to an interest in human behaviour, in the mutations of conduct under the vagaries of fate, that recognised the richness of his present study.

The absent nobles were not idle. Their disaffection took military steps, and when news came that their plans were rapidly maturing, Mary and her consort retired to Borthwick Castle, where presently they were surprised by an advance force under Lord Hume. Bothwell escaped from an unnoticed door and Mary was left to deal with her insurgent subjects. Hume and his men seemed hardly to know their own minds. When Lady Borthwick told them that Bothwell had fled towards Dunbar they asked Mary to come out and join in pursuit of him. Their behaviour was

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not remarkable for its courtesy towards the Queen : they used speech too undutiful and unseemly to be reported : and when Mary refused to join a troop so undoubtedly rude and so dubiously loyal, they retired to Edinburgh to discuss what might be done next. Mary left the castle in a hurry and joined Bothwell at Dunbar.

With some difficulty Bothwell raised a force of three or four thousand men. Meanwhile the confederate Lords took Edinburgh Castle and summoned the lieges to help them in their threefold task of delivering the Queen from thralldom, of preserving the Prince, and punishing the murderers of Darnley. Morton and Lindsay, Atholl and Tullibardine, Mar and Kirkcaldy of Grange were among the rebels. Bothwell had no subordinates of note or military experience. He himself, though able enough in a tussle, was unversed in tactics.

The opposing armies met on June 15th at Carberry, near Musselburgh. They were roughly equal in numbers, and neither side was eager to fight. The day was spent in conversation and the exchange of some half-hearted bombast. M. du Croc went to and fro between the armies as a self-appointed mediator, but met with no success. The

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laird of Grange rode over to the Queen, with a promise of safe conduct, and while he was assuring her that they would all honour and serve her if she would but abandon Bothwell, Bothwell gave orders to shoot him. The Queen hotly forbade this impropriety, and fortunately was in time to prevent it.¹ Then Bothwell offered to fight in single combat, and his challenge was taken by Kirkcaldy and Tullibardine and Lindsay. But the first two he declined to meet on the ground that their rank was insufficient, and Lindsay's acceptance was also avoided. It appears that Mary shrank from the sight of a duel, and again resorted to conversation with the rebels. Bothwell's force dwindled as deserters slipped away, and presently Carberry lost the aspect of battle that in the morning it had worn so threateningly. There was parleying on the one hand, desertion on the other, and in the evening Bothwell took advantage of the confusion, mounted his horse, and fled. It is said that Morton, whom Bothwell had befriended in exile, was party to his escape, and as his dismissal was the main item in the confederates' terms, it is probable that Mary also encouraged his flight. Beaton definitely asserts that it was she who

¹ Melville.

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persuaded him to go. Even the statement that she parted from him with kisses and tears is not wholly incredible if, as subsequent events suggest, she was now pregnant by him : to believe that so grave a physiological change may condition behaviour is not wholly a sentimental view.

Kirkcaldy led Mary into the confederate lines, where she was greeted and frightened by fierce cries of 'Burn the hoor !' She was conducted to Edinburgh behind a banner painted with a picture of the murdered Darnley and the orphaned Prince, over the caption, 'Judge and defend my cause, O Lord !' She was roughly treated and lodged in the Provost's house opposite the Market Cross. There, not unnaturally, she gave way to hysteria. A mob gathered under her window, hostile at first, and she cried to them that she had been betrayed by her subjects and made captive by them. Beaton says : ' She came to the said window sundry times in so miserable a state, her hair hanging about her lugs, and her breast, yea, the most part of all her body, from the waist up, bare and discovered, that no man could look upon her but she moved him to pity and compassion. For my own part I was satisfied to hear of it, and might not suffer to see it.'

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But her frenzy did not last. She sent a secret message to Sir James Balfour, Captain of Edinburgh Castle, who had already betrayed his charge, bidding him be faithful and not give up the castle.

In the evening she was taken to Holyrood, and from there, without comforts, without a wardrobe, and with two attendants only, she was removed to the island castle of Lochleven. This was the manner in which the confederate nobles delivered her from thralldom.

For nearly eleven months she remained a prisoner on the island. Less than six weeks after her arrival she was driven, by fear and her own physical weakness, to abdicate in favour of her infant son and to appoint Murray as Regent. Both England and France competed for charge of the Prince, but the Scots Lords realised his value and kept him in their own care. The Hamiltons, Argyll, and Huntly were still inclined to favour the Queen, but there was, for the moment, among the rank and file of her subjects a feeling of hostility towards her sedulously inflamed by the Kirk. Knox, who had been in England, returned to Edinburgh in June, and preached on his old text of hatred : ' Let men patiently abide and turn unto their God, and then shall

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he utterly destroy that hoor in her hoordom, or else he shall put it in the hearts of a multitude to take the same vengeance upon her that has been taken of Jezebel and Athaliah ; for greater abomination was never in the nature of any woman than is in her, whereof we have seen only the buds ; but we will after taste of the ripe fruit of her impiety, if God cut not her days short.' He and his fellow-preachers decked their sermons with arguments from the bloodier parts of the Bible, from history, and from their interpretation of the constitution and customs of Scotland. Daily Knox shouted his vituperations against the Queen, and bade his savagely bemused congregations avert the wrath of God by killing that murderess and adulteress. Throckmorton, the English ambassador, was seriously alarmed by this vicious propaganda, and did what he could among the nobles to counteract it. He found that the women citizens of Edinburgh were particularly incensed against Mary, while their husbands were 'mad enough'—the multitude is ever virtuous on false premises and the wrong occasions—and he believed that it was only by his exertions that she was not murdered. She refused, however, to divorce Bothwell—an obvious way of placat-

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ing her discontented lieges—because she believed herself to be with child by him, and wished to protect its legitimacy.

Bothwell in the meantime had fled northwards. He visited Orkney and Shetland, provided himself with ships and a pirate crew, sailed to Norway, revisited his old love Anne Thorssen, settled in Copenhagen and sat down to write his memoirs.

Though remote from the bustling world, the castle of Lochleven was not without activities of its own. For the first few weeks after her capture Mary lay seriously ill. At the time of her abdication she was in a state of particular weakness, having just suffered, according to Nau, the miscarriage of twins. This was three months after her abduction by Bothwell. The story, by no means improbable, is further recommended to belief by Mary's own assertions that she was pregnant when taken to Lochleven. Other stories grew out of her captivity and her friendship for George Douglas, younger brother of Sir William, Lord of Lochleven and her warder. Labanoff, in his *Recueil*, says: 'In February, 1568, Mary Stuart is at Lochleven delivered of a daughter, who is carried into France, where she afterwards becomes a nun in the convent of our Lady of Soissons.' And a

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second fable credits her with having borne a son to George Douglas. Clearly one of these stories is untrue, and if Nau's statement is correct, then both are improbable. It is true that if the miscarriage occurred about the middle of July, there was just time, allowing a respectable interval for her recovery, for the birth of a full-term child before her escape, which took place on May 2nd. But plans for escape were afoot long before that, and an unsuccessful attempt was actually made in March. Either the hypothetical seven-months child in February or the putative full-term infant in April would have unduly complicated this attempt, and still more so that other which depended on jumping from a high wall.

There is nothing to invalidate the supposition that young George Douglas fell in love with Mary, but that she fell in love with him—to a degree, at any rate, that bade her express love by manifestations more serious than a smile, a fleeting caress, and amiable words—is unlikely for three reasons: the antipathy to sexual intercourse suggested by both her marriages; the reinforcement of that antipathy that must have resulted from her association with Bothwell; and the synchronisation of her escape with a season when, had she yielded to signifi-

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cant love, her health would have been delicate, and either her flight or the island embarrassed by the encumbrance of a suckling.

But George Douglas fell in love, and plotted so zealously and often to bring about the Queen's escape that he became suspect and was banished from the castle. Then the task fell on Willy Douglas, a youngster of no acknowledged kinship to the other Douglasses in the house. He stole a key, dropping a napkin over it at dinner, and found a boat. He led Mary out of the castle, locked the gate behind them, and rowed her over the loch. George Douglas was waiting for her with horses. They mounted and rode. In a little while Lord Seton met them. They crossed the Forth in a fishing-boat, and at South Queensferry Lord Claude Hamilton joined them. That night the Queen lay at Lord Seton's castle of Niddry.

In the early morning she continued her journey and came to Hamilton Palace, and there many of the loyalist families gathered round her. But Huntly and Ogilvy were still in the north. Under a bold and skilful leader Mary's army might have accomplished a great deal, for it numbered six thousand when Murray had been able to mobilise little more than half that number. But apparently, en-

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couraged by her successful recruiting to expect further reinforcements at the same rate—Huntly and Ogilvy were on the way—Mary decided to play for time by retiring to Dumbarton Castle. On the way there her vanguard marched into an ambush at the village of Langside and was roughly treated.

Kirkcaldy of Grange commanded the opposing force. He appears to have been the only real soldier in Scotland, though there were many skilful exponents of raiding and brawling. At Langside the leaders of Mary's army, the Hamiltons, distinguished themselves by their ignorance of the very elements of war and a reasonable willingness to die face forward. Argyll, her general, was so upset by the conflict that he fell from his horse in a swoon. And Mary, her spirit failing, fled from the field.

There is nothing in her history sadder than this panic-stricken flight. There was every excuse for it, but no excuse can mitigate the tragedy of a brave heart defeated. She had suffered physical hurt and spiritual torment. There was the turmoil of Riccio's murder, her escape from Holyrood heavy with child, her long ride to the Hermitage and the desperate illness that followed it; she had been tormented by a weak and malicious husband, and suffered

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the shock of his murder ; she had been raped by Bothwell, and lain a year in prison ; she could remember the thousand faces of her enemies—Knox and her bastard brother, the traitor Lethington, Morton, the women crowding about the Provost's house in Edinburgh, and Lindsay's pikemen shouting ' Burn the hoor ! ' These, more than Kirkcaldy's men, were what she fled from at Langside. If they caught her now they might burn her indeed. At best there would be the narrow walls of another prison, the grim faces of Murray and Morton, Lethington's cold voice, and the mob howling against her all week and going to church on Sunday to have their hatred re-kindled by the holy fire of John Knox.

She fled from Scotland. Hungry and sleepless she rode southwards. There was no reason in her flight to England save the fugitive's reason to find sanctuary. Elizabeth had protested friendship for her. Elizabeth had written to Throckmorton, less than a year before : ' You shall plainly declare unto them (the Lords), that if they shall determine anything to the deprivation of the Queen their sovereign lady of her royal estate, we are well assured of our own determination, and we have some just and probable cause to think the like of

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other Princes of Christendom, that we will make ourselves a plain party against them, for example to all posterity.' It is not improbable that Mary knew of that letter. Certainly she could remember other protestations of her cousin's amity, and though in a calmer mood she had questioned their sincerity, there was no time for questions now. Elizabeth had offered help and friendship, and Elizabeth was strong enough to render help. There was no such strength in Scotland.

Mary and her little party—George and Willy Douglas were with her—came to the Solway and put to sea. It was useless now to think of wiser plans and a safer refuge, for the tide took them and carried them ashore. Mary landed in Cumberland on May 16th, 1568.

XI

LODGED in Carlisle, Mary spent two months almost in sight of Scotland. The Catholic noblemen in the north of England greeted her with distinguished courtesy, but Elizabeth, presumably by Cecil's advice, was more circumspect in her welcome. To Mary's letter praying for help and hospitality the English Queen replied with a statement that she could not be received until she had cleared herself from the suspicion of collusion in Darnley's murder. Mary accepted the proposal for a trial, and replied with an accusation of complicity against Morton and Lethington.

In July she was removed to Bolton Castle in Yorkshire, and while she was there a Conference took place in York between commissioners representing Elizabeth, Mary, and the infant James VI. Murray, Lethington, Lindsay, Morton, and Buchanan were among the latter. Elizabeth's representatives included the Duke of Norfolk and the Earl of Sussex, while Mary nominated, among others, the

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Lords Boyd and Herries and Bishop Lesley. Presently the Conference moved to London.

The most important evidence was produced by Lethington and Buchanan at a private meeting with Elizabeth's commissioners. This consisted of various documents, such as the bond by which the Lords had agreed to forward Bothwell's marriage to the Queen ; two contracts of marriage ; a series of pseudo-sonnets written in French ; and a collection of private letters alleged to have been written by Mary to Bothwell. These were the notorious Casket Letters.

Their history is curious. If they were genuine, then Mary was guilty of murder in the most abominable degree. The existing versions, however, are retranslated from translations of originals, written in French, that disappeared from mortal view rather more than three hundred years ago : therefore the nice discrimination of a handwriting expert cannot usefully be employed on them. And, as in the case of Homer and the Bible, attempts to apply the higher criticism are likely to be qualified by the critic's quiddities and preconceptions ; therefore the products of the higher criticism cannot be accepted without reserve. Historical enquiry, then, seems to

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offer the only valid means of establishing the authenticity or fraudulence of the letters.

According to a sworn statement of the Earl of Morton—whose word there is no need to accept—the silver casket came into his possession on June 20th, 1567. It was alleged to have been taken from one of Bothwell's servants who had been sent to rescue it from Edinburgh after the debacle at Carberry. By July 12th the Spanish and French ambassadors were gossiping about its contents: the letters and the sonnets, that is. In December the Scottish Parliament was told of their existence, and the letters were exhibited. In September, 1568, the Queen's friends asserted that the handwriting was not hers. Mary herself, about the same time, hotly declared that the letters were 'false and feigned, forged and invented only to my dishonour and slander,' and said that she knew of several people in her enemies' employment who could imitate her writing.

In June, 1568, Murray sent a servant called Wood to England with Scots translations of the letters and the query, 'If the French originals are found to tally with the Scots translations, will that be reckoned good evidence?' Why, one asks, did Wood not carry copies of the French? A possible reason is that new informa-

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tion might be acquired, the Scots translations be augmented, and the French 'originals' correspondingly adapted.¹ Here is another curiosity : In the summer of 1567 Murray had told de Silva, the Spanish ambassador, that there was proof of Mary's guilt in one of her letters wherein she detailed plans for murdering Darnley, and advised Bothwell to expedite their marriage by poisoning his wife ; but Letter II, the letter subsequently exhibited as evidence of her participation in the Darnley murder, tells quite a different story and has no reference to the poisoning of Lady Jean. What is the reason for this discrepancy ? That the original letter was a forgery, discarded when a more plausible tale had been concocted ?

A third curiosity : One Crawford, a servant of Lennox, gave evidence of secret conversations between Mary and Darnley. In Letter II is Mary's own account—if the letter is genuine—of those conversations. In several places Crawford's evidence and the relevant passages in Letter II are identical. Word copies word with a fidelity that even the most credulous must find remarkable. Were both Mary and Crawford endowed with phonographic memories to record with such accuracy

¹ Andrew Lang.

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fast-moving words? Was Crawford copying Letter II to corroborate it? Or was Letter II based on other notes that Crawford said he had made?

This Letter II is an astonishing document. It is very long. It would fill three columns of *The Times*, but, if it did, the morning readers of that newspaper would certainly be startled by its passion, its fierce juxtaposition of bitterness and desire, and the stark record of a sick man's talk. It is indisputable that the forger was a man of talent: such a man as took pleasure in observing the mutations of the human spirit under the vagaries of fortune: Lethington perhaps? He knew Mary as well as anyone. He had been, at times, her confidant. He had seen her and listened to her in her lonely court at Holyrood when she and Bothwell maintained their state with the Earl of Crawford for courtier and servants for their subjects. Lethington might have found a diary, old love-letters that Mary had written, not to Bothwell, but to Darnley in the early days of their love, and chopped them up, patched pieces together in the likeness of passion, and poisoned the whole with phrases of his own device.

Darnley, ill in bed, is made to complain of

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the Queen's coldness. 'I am young,' he says. 'You will say that you have forgiven me oft times, and yet that I return to my faults. May not a man of my age, for lack of counsel, fall twice or thrice, or fail of his promise, and at last repent himself and be chastised by experience? If I may obtain pardon, I protest I shall never make fault again. And I crave no other thing but that we may be at board and bed together as husband and wife; and if you will not consent hereunto I shall never rise out of this bed. I pray you, tell me your resolution. God knows I am punished for making my God of you, and for having no other thought but on you; and if at any time I offend you, you are the cause'—had this been written forty years later it would make an interesting gloss on *Othello*—'because when any offends me, if, for my refuge, I might complain unto you, I would speak it unto no other body; but when I hear anything, not being familiar with you, necessity constrains me to keep it in my breast, and that causes me to lose my wit for very anger.'

He asks Mary to stay with him, but she will not. He complains that he cannot sleep. You never heard him speak more humbly, she says: 'And if I had not a proof of his heart

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of wax, and that mine were not of a diamond whereinto no shot can make breach, but that which comes from your hand, I would have almost had pity of him. But fear not, the fortress shall hold unto the death.'

'I write all things,' she says, 'howbeit they be of little weight, to the end that you may take the best of all to judge upon. I am in doing of a work here that I hate greatly. Have you not desire to laugh to see me lie so well, at the least to dissemble so well, and to tell him truth occasionally?'

Then, with a quick change of tone : 'I am not well at ease ; and yet very glad to write unto you when the rest are sleeping, since I cannot sleep as they do and as I would desire, that is, in your arms, my dear love, whom I pray God to preserve from all evil, and send you repose. . . . I am weary and going to sleep, and yet I cease not to scribble all this paper in so much as remains thereof. Cursed might this pockish man be that causes me have so much pain, for without him I should have a far pleasanter subject to discourse upon. He is not over much deformed, yet he has *taken* very badly. He has almost slain me with his breath ; it is worse than your uncle's ; and yet I come no nearer unto him but in a

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chair at the bed-foot, and he being at the other end thereof.'

She tells of a bracelet she is making, and bids her lover keep it hidden, for all the world has seen her busy with it. Then she speaks of Darnley and deadly matters, her persuasion, and at last his consent to go wherever she cares to take him: 'Alas! I never deceived anybody. But I remit me altogether to your will. Send me advertisement what I shall do, and whatsoever thing shall come thereof, I shall obey you. Advise too with yourself, if you can find out any more secret invention by medicine; for he should take medicine and the bath at Craigmillar. He may not come forth of the house this long time. *Summa*, by all that I can learn, he is in great suspicion, and yet notwithstanding, he gives credit to my word; but yet not so far that he will show any thing to me; but nevertheless I shall draw it out of him, if you will that I avow all unto him. But I will never rejoice to deceive anybody that trusts in me: yet notwithstanding you may command me in all things. Have no evil opinion of me for that cause, by reason you are the occasion of it yourself; because, for my own particular revenge, I would not do it to him.'

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She remembers Darnley's dread again : ' For certainly he suspects of the thing you know, and of his life. But as to the last, how soon that I spoke two or three good words unto him, he rejoices and is out of doubt.' She chatters in turn of the bracelet she is making, of Lethington, Argyll, and the Hamiltons. ' Burn this letter,' she says, ' for it is over dangerous ' ; and brings it to an end with phrases so innocent and wrought of love's simplicity that every day ten thousand women use them still : ' It is late ; I desire never to cease from writing unto you ; yet now, after the kissing of your hands, I will end my letter. Excuse evil writing, and read it twice over. Excuse that thing that is scribbled, for I had no paper yesterday when I wrote that. Remember upon your love, and write unto her, and that very often. Love me as I shall do you.'

It would have been a remarkable letter. As it is, it is a magnificent invention, even though much of it may consist of genuine patches transferred out of their context. The last paragraph, for instance, might have been borrowed from a dozen missives found forgotten under pillows in Holyrood. If Lethington concocted it, Lethington deserves congratulation. It is certainly on a higher level, from a literary

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point of view, than the so-called sonnets discovered in the Casket, which are hardly more than stuff for an autograph-album.

After the evidence of the letters and other proof had been led, Mary was invited to reply. Her answer was to withdraw her commissioners. This high-handedness, wanton at first sight, was in reality justified. The Conference had become a trial, an impeachment, after the admission of Murray's additional charge, that explicitly accused Mary of complicity in the murder. But the English commissioners had no jurisdiction over her : therefore she was justified in withdrawing her representatives. Her accusers, the witnesses against her, were themselves guilty of the crime they put upon her : Lethington had agreed to the murder, Morton had foreknowledge of it, Murray watched it through his fingers. Her accusers had liberty to speak and no limits were set to their perjury : Mary was not permitted to answer their charges. The prisoner, whom Elizabeth had no right to treat as a prisoner, saw prosecutors guilty of their own indictment, and a court that was not entitled to pass judgment on her : she had good reason to withdraw her commissioners.

Judgment was given in January. Murray

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and his party were acquitted of rebellion, and the Conference affirmed that nothing had been proved against Mary. But the Casket forgeries had very usefully blackened her character.

Mary was nineteen years a prisoner in England. The ultimate unkindness of Elizabeth's treatment is generally excused by pointing out that for all these years Mary was a menace to the peace of England, and during several of them she actively conspired to procure her freedom, ameliorate her condition by marriage, provoke the invasion of England by foreign powers, and otherwise annoy her cousin's sovereign peace. All this is perfectly true. But it must be remembered that Elizabeth had no right to keep Mary in confinement, and that Elizabeth had offered the first offence by insulting the Scottish Queen with the bland injustice of the Westminster Conference.

From Bolton Castle Mary was conveyed to Tutbury in Staffordshire, a vile, insanitary, ramshackle building where she was compelled to erect tents and ramparts of tapestry in her bedroom to keep the rain out and the draughts, and where no tapestries could keep out the stench of the privies. She fell ill, and grew well again. Her health became more uncertain as the years went on, but the growing

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frequency of illness seemed only to promote her strength in recovery. She had always the will to live, and though one plot failed after another, she found new hope in the prospect of the succeeding one.

The Duke of Norfolk, Elizabeth's commissioner at the Conference, kept her in hope of new adventure for some time. He aspired to her hand in marriage, and Mary, though she never saw him, welcomed his proposals. An alliance so exclusively political, so immune from passion, greatly appealed to her, and she considered measures for divorcing Bothwell. It is worthy of remark that Norfolk, a somewhat timid man, had enjoyed the fullest opportunity of examining the so-called proof of Mary's participation in the murder of Darnley, yet he showed no reluctance in offering himself as a successor to Darnley. Unfortunately for the Duke, however, his proposals were discovered and disapproved by Elizabeth, who sent him to the Tower. In 1572 the detection of the Ridolfi Plot, in which he was implicated and which depended for its success on the invasion of England by Spanish troops, resulted in his execution ; and Mary was saved from a like penalty, which both Houses of Parliament demanded, only by the clemency of Elizabeth.

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Previous to this her hope had been awakened and she had been rescued from the stink of Tutbury by a northern rising under the Earls of Northumberland and Westmoreland. The rebels came so near Tutbury that Mary was hurried to Coventry. But the attack dwindled and died and turned to a retreat. The Earls fled into Scotland, and their poor pressed troopers were caught and hanged to discourage their masters from any further naughtiness. And Mary was taken back to Tutbury. Some slight consolation came when she heard that one of the Hamiltons had murdered her brother Murray in Linlithgow. By this news she was honestly delighted, as she had cause to be.

From Tutbury she was removed to Sheffield, where, with some temporary changes, she remained for fourteen years under the care of the Earl of Shrewsbury. News of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew excited the English Protestants against her, but Elizabeth, concurring in the general view that Mary's execution would conveniently deprive her Catholic subjects of a focus for their loyalty, yet shrank from the business of signing her cousin's death-warrant. She, or Cecil, conceived an ingenious alternative. A messenger was sent to

Edinburgh to suggest that Mary might be released and returned to her own country if the Regent, Mar, and his Chancellor, Morton, promised to execute her immediately. But the negotiations were unfruitful, for Morton was excessive in his demand for compensatory assistance in reducing Edinburgh Castle, which was now being held for Mary by Lethington and Kirkcaldy of Grange. It is interesting to find Lethington changing his allegiance yet again, and one is increasingly tempted to describe his behaviour not as treachery but merely as individualism : *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*. But neither Lethington nor Grange found their shift to loyalty of long profit, for in May, 1573, Morton reduced the castle with the help of English soldiers, and Lethington died in prison a few days later, Grange on the gallows in August. John Knox, who, years before, had shared captivity in the galleys with Grange, had predeceased his old comrade by nine months. The Reformer's last days had not been happy, for there was faction in the Kirk, and Edinburgh had filled again with supporters of Mary, whom he still hated. But he died with an assenting gesture and a proud assertion of his monopoly in God's confidence. He left neither fortune nor debts

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behind him. Though he had not made a blessing of God's word, he had not made merchandise of it.

For several years Elizabeth was undisturbed by conspiracy, Mary unexcited by hope. The poor captive took to needlework, and sent pretty embroidered gifts to her cousin. She maintained a vast correspondence, and diverted herself with reading and lap-dogs. She had Mary Seton with her, and she played with the small granddaughter of Lady Shrewsbury. Then came a silver whisper of romance, a thrilling hope, a glorious dream of marriage to Don John of Austria. Lepanto spread its colours to the west, and the late Queen of Scotland waited, with drumming fingers, for the last knight in Europe. But the Dutchmen killed Don John, and the Queen gave up her hope, and took her needlework again, and played with her lap-dogs, and wrote long letters to all her friends and to no purpose.

In 1584 she found new gaolers in Sir Ralph Sadler and John Somers. She was removed to Wingfield Manor, and thence to Tutbury again. Sadler was replaced by Sir Amyas Paulet, and Mary was taken from Tutbury to Chartley in the same county. From there she maintained a brisk correspondence in cipher

XII

MARY conducted her own defence. The preliminary enquiry opened with the reading of a letter from Elizabeth which, in so much as it foretold the verdict, somewhat invalidated the pending trial. Elizabeth heavily remarked on the inestimable grief with which she had heard Mary's protestations of innocence, because 'we find by most clear and evident proof that the contrary will be verified and maintained against you.' To this Mary replied with a protest against the injustice and illegality of the proceedings. She was unprovided with counsel, and she had no knowledge of English procedure. She challenged the court to produce direct evidence against her. And, moreover, in virtue of her Scottish sovereignty, she denied the jurisdiction of an English tribunal.

The assertion that she was ignorant of the law, however, resembles the self-depreciation of an Oriental guest. It was according to the rules of the game rather than a true confession, for immediately she began to argue, not only

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with spirit but with subtlety, about the procedure of the trial. If she was to be tried by common law, then her judges must cite example and precedent ; if by canon law, then only Roman Catholics could interpret and apply it, since Roman Catholics had framed it ; if by civil law, then she must be judged by members of the Continental universities, who were its only authorities. For a long time she debated in this manner with Burghley and the Lord Chancellor, Bromley, and would not be moved. Then Sir Christopher Hatton, more artful than they, suggested that Mary, if indeed she were guiltless, would do wrong to her reputation by avoiding a trial. He advised her to submit to judgment, and so, by proving her innocence, avoid the eternal stain that her honour would otherwise suffer. Then Mary offered to answer their charges before Parliament or the Queen in council, on condition that her protest be acknowledged and she declared next in succession to Elizabeth. But she was in no position to bargain, and finally she agreed to answer the commissioners on one point only : her alleged concurrence in that part of the plot which threatened Elizabeth's life.

The trial proper was held on October 14th and 15th. *Mutatis mutandis*, it resembled bear-

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baiting rather than a court of law, and before it finished it grew almost as noisy as the commoner sport. A formidable array of English noblemen and English lawyers confronted the Queen. Eight or nine earls, a dozen barons, the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Treasurer, the Chief Justices, the Attorney-General, the Solicitor-General, the Queen's Sergeant and their uncounted subsidiaries maintained Elizabeth's case. Mary, in the solitude to which she had grown accustomed, defended herself. She reiterated and reasserted her status as an independent sovereign ; she insisted that *Elizabeth had no jurisdiction over her* ; she declared herself innocent of any attempt against Elizabeth's life ; she protested against the laws, but newly written in the statute book, on which the commission was based ; she refuted the application to herself of evidence led against the Babington plotters ; she demanded to see the original letters of which copies were being circulated as evidence ; she defended her assumption of the English arms ; Burghley accused her of still asserting her claim to the English crown, and she answered that she had never given up her rights, that she did not now, and never would ; she accused Walsingham of forgery ; she enquired most

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pertinently why Curll and Nau, whose depositions had been taken, were not examined in her presence ; she asked for the production as evidence of her own papers that had been seized ; she held her accusers off, she tapped every rottenness in their case, she exposed the illegality of their procedure, and stood dauntless at bay while they amplified their charges with sound and fury.

On the second day Burghley himself conducted the prosecution, and after long wrangling Mary admitted certain correspondence with foreign princes ; admitted that the cause of Rome was dear to her ; and admitted conspiring to escape. But still she denied complicity in any plot against Elizabeth's life, and again she demanded to be heard by Parliament.

By Elizabeth's orders the proceedings were then adjourned. Ten days later the commissioners met in the Star Chamber, where they re-examined such evidence as they thought proper to the occasion, and with the single dissenting voice of Lord Zouch declared Mary guilty of compassing divers matters tending to the destruction of Elizabeth. Both Houses of Parliament promptly fortified the verdict by recommending Mary's immediate execution,

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but Elizabeth, with her customary disinclination for an overt decision, still temporised. Mary waited for three weeks before she heard the Star Chamber's verdict.

She heard the news, not only without dismay, but with a certain triumph when she learnt that she was considered to be a dangerous instrument for the restoration of the Roman Church. Then, having fought with marvellous ability and most notable courage, and having proudly acknowledged defeat, she opened with dignity again, with subtlety again, a short and final rearguard-action. She wrote to Elizabeth praying certain favours in respect of her execution and sepulture, and contrived between these dolorous appeals to make Elizabeth feel very uncomfortable. 'I will accuse no one,' she wrote; 'nay, I pardon with a sincere heart everyone, even as I desire everyone may grant forgiveness to me, God the first. But I know that you, more than any one, ought to feel at heart the honour or dishonour of your own blood, and that, moreover, of a queen and the daughter of a king.

'Then, Madame, for the sake of that Jesus to whose name all powers bow, I require you to ordain that when my enemies have slaked their black thirst for my innocent blood, you will permit my poor desolated servants alto-

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gether to carry away my corpse, to bury it in holy ground with the other queens of France. . . . As they tell me that you will in nothing force my conscience nor my religion, and have even conceded me a priest, refuse me not this my last request, that you will permit free sepulchre to this body when the soul is departed, which, when united, could never obtain liberty to live in repose, such as you would procure for yourself; against which repose—before God I speak—I never aimed a blow : but God will let you see the truth of all after my death.

‘ I could wish that all my papers were brought to you without reserve, that at last it may be manifest to you that the sole care of your safety was not confined to those who are so prompt to persecute me. . . . To conclude, I pray God, the just Judge, of His mercy that He will enlighten you with His Holy Spirit, and that He will give you His grace to die in the perfect charity I am disposed to do, and to pardon all those who have caused, or who have co-operated in, my death. Such will be my last prayer to my end, which I esteem myself happy will precede the persecution which I foresee menaces this isle, where God is no longer seriously feared and

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revered, but vanity and worldly policy rule and govern all. Yet will I accuse no one, nor give way to presumption. Yet while abandoning this world, and preparing myself for a better, I must remind you that one day you will have to answer for your charge, and for all those whom you doom, and that I desire that my blood and my country may be remembered in that time.'

The history of the next three months is part of Elizabeth's story rather than of Mary's, and though one may deprecate the indecision, the cruel procrastination of the English Queen, one may still sympathise with her obvious distress. Her cowardly attempt to persuade Paulet, the gaoler of Fotheringay, to shoulder his Queen's responsibility and murder his prisoner, contemptible though it was, betrayed an agony of mind that cannot be disregarded even in face of Mary's greater agony. How often did Elizabeth read those terrible words : ' One day you will have to answer for your charge, and I desire that my blood and my country may be remembered in that time ' ? How often did she think of the chilling prayer that her own death might be graced by charity to all ? Queen against queen had been hard fighting, and woman to woman was no milder.

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At last, on February 7th, 1587, the Earls of Kent and Shrewsbury arrived at Fotheringay with a warrant for the execution. Mary, tranquil and most queenly still, thanked them for their news. She was ready to die. She protested her innocence again, her faith in her Church, and her anointed royalty. Her tranquillity failed when they tried, with vulgar zeal, to force the ministrations of a Protestant chaplain upon her, and she fiercely refused this ungainly courtesy. There was a priest in the castle, but he was not permitted to receive her last confession.

She sat late that night, making her will and disposing of small treasures to her servants. She named the King of France and the Duke of Guise executors of this testament of humble legacies. Then Jane Kennedy read to her from her Book of Hours. In the morning, early, her ladies dressed her. She had grown stouter with age, and was somewhat stiff with lack of exercise and frequent illness. Much stooping over her writing-table and embroidery-frame had rounded her shoulders, and a certain roundness, not promised in youth but yet not uncomely, had invaded her face. She dressed with some magnificence, wearing a long-sleeved gown of black satin over

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a petticoat of crimson satin above, crimson velvet below, with a long white veil, and shoes of Spanish leather.

Guards and a crowd of spectators filled the great hall. The scaffold, the chair, and the block were draped in black. The Queen, in black, sat while the warrant was read and the Dean of Peterborough preached an interminable sermon. The Queen interrupted him. They argued fiercely about their Churches, and prayed in opposition to each other. Then her women undid the black gown, and took it off, and the Queen stood in crimson on the dingy scaffold.

She knelt clumsily, holding the block with her hands till one of the headsmen took them in his own. The other struck, and missed. His third blow cut off her head. 'So perish all the Queen's enemies,' said the Dean.

XIII

A LITTLE while before her death Mary had composed a short poem whose sentiment was appropriate enough for the condemned cell, but that mingled with its sad words a curious sound of gaiety :

‘ O Domine Deus, speravi in te !
O care mi Jesu, nunc libera me !
In dura catena, in misera poena,
Languendo, gemendo, et genu flectendo,
Adoro, imploro, ut liberes me.’

It is doubtful if groaning and sighing were ever before or since given such lyrical jollity. Her knees were bent in prayer but her heart was dancing, and the last line sings itself into the confidence of escape. Read it once, and you will find in its rhythm the urgency of her desire to be done with life and its prisons ; read it again, and yet again, and you will find that her desire has the pace and eagerness of a child demanding that time shall gallop and bring holidays with the morning ; and if a poem’s rhythm begins in the heart, then Mary, importunate of

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death, had the trust of children who never doubt that in holiday time the sun shines all day long.

Nor can this strange gladness have been the mindless beatitude of an ecstatic. The enchanted vertigo of a flagellated saint is no more consonant with Mary's character than the untidy fervour of a wanton. Her religion was perfectly sane. She devoutly believed in her Church and her God, but her creed was not obsession or intoxication. And so the wilful gaiety of the prayer must be the expression of her vitality, undaunted by the thought of death, undiminished by fear of the unknown.

There, in heroic vitality and a spirit that would not be quenched, is the source of her tragedy and of her power to trouble the ages with thoughts of her that time has not stilled. Even beauty, queenliness, and disaster do not of themselves make a legend. Only when a more than common vitality inspires them do they overflow the centuries; only when they are the trappings of a life too eager, too abundant to find peace in life, does their memory survive. And when Mary, crying to God in her last days, cried in jovial amphibrachs, she was substantiating her claim to legendary if not to actual immortality.

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It is, perhaps, fair also to say that a legend, to be a good enduring legend, should have some congruity with the land of its birth. And to this postulate Mary conforms, having been brave, energetic, and unfortunate. She conforms to the idea of Scotland in that, despite her many virtues, she lacked the co-ordinating factor, the mating principle, to bring them success or fruition. That incompleteness has always been Scotland's destiny. There is, moreover, something Scottish and uncomely in the fact that her son went to London, where he became wealthy, famous, and something of a joke : falling heir to that which his mother had ruled and lost, and that which she had worked for and never won, he was yet disinherited of her courage and her beauty and her grace. And the beauty that she failed to transmit is also part of her title to be Scotland's Queen : to be, not merely to have been.— A romantic assertion ? But

‘ Vivre sans rêve, qu'est-ce ?
Et j'aime la Princesse
Lointaine ! ’

Sir Francis Knollys, meeting Mary in Carlisle, wrote of her to Cecil : ‘ This lady and princess is a notable woman. She seemeth to

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regard no ceremonious honour besides the acknowledging of her estate regal. She showeth a disposition to speak much, to be bold, to be pleasant, and to be very familiar. She showeth a great desire to be avenged of her enemies ; she showeth a readiness to expose herself to all perils in hope of victory ; she delighteth much to hear of hardiness and valiancy, commending by name all approved hardy men of her country, although they be her enemies ; and she commendeth no cowardness even in her friends. The thing that most she thirsteth after is victory, and it seemeth to be indifferent to her to have her enemies diminish, either by the sword of her friends, or by the liberal promises and rewards of her purse, or by division and quarrels raised among themselves ; so that for victory's sake pain and perils seemeth pleasant unto her, and in respect of victory, wealth and all things seemeth to her contemptuous and vile.'

There indeed is a proper queen for the high hills, snow-covered, with the sunlight a blinding gleam in the corries, and blue shadows on the dappled snow ; for Scotland in the gipsy colours of autumn, of silver birch and discoloured leaf and the solid black-hearted green of the pines ; Scotland of swift amber streams

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and silver firths that take the knees of the mountains in their arms ; of the islands that float on the western sea under sails of indigo and pearl and the vapour of gold ; Scotland of pibrochs and the silenced music of the harp, of *Christ's Kirk on the Green*, of Urquhart, and rough bothy-singers ; of the makars and the ballads, of the chivalry that rode to Flodden, of broken clans and banished men, of battle-fields from Lucknow to the Somme ; of beauty that brings no profit but to the heart, and of disaster that wrings the heart. . . . True, there is another Scotland, somewhat provincial in spirit and circumscribed in its imagination ; a lion couchant, with the unaspiring steeple of a depressing church and a factory chimney for supporters ; a country whose native violence and traditionally dogged temper have violently asserted and now most doggedly maintain a standard of unflinching mediocrity. The sentiments and the smoke of this other Scotland somewhat obscure the old romantic kingdom—but what of it ?

Tecum Scotia nostra comparatur ?
O saeculum insapiens et infacetum !

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NOTE.—I have Englished the extracts from Letter II
(*The Casket Letters*) and quotations from the
older writers.

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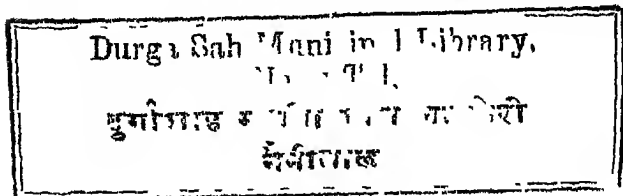
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